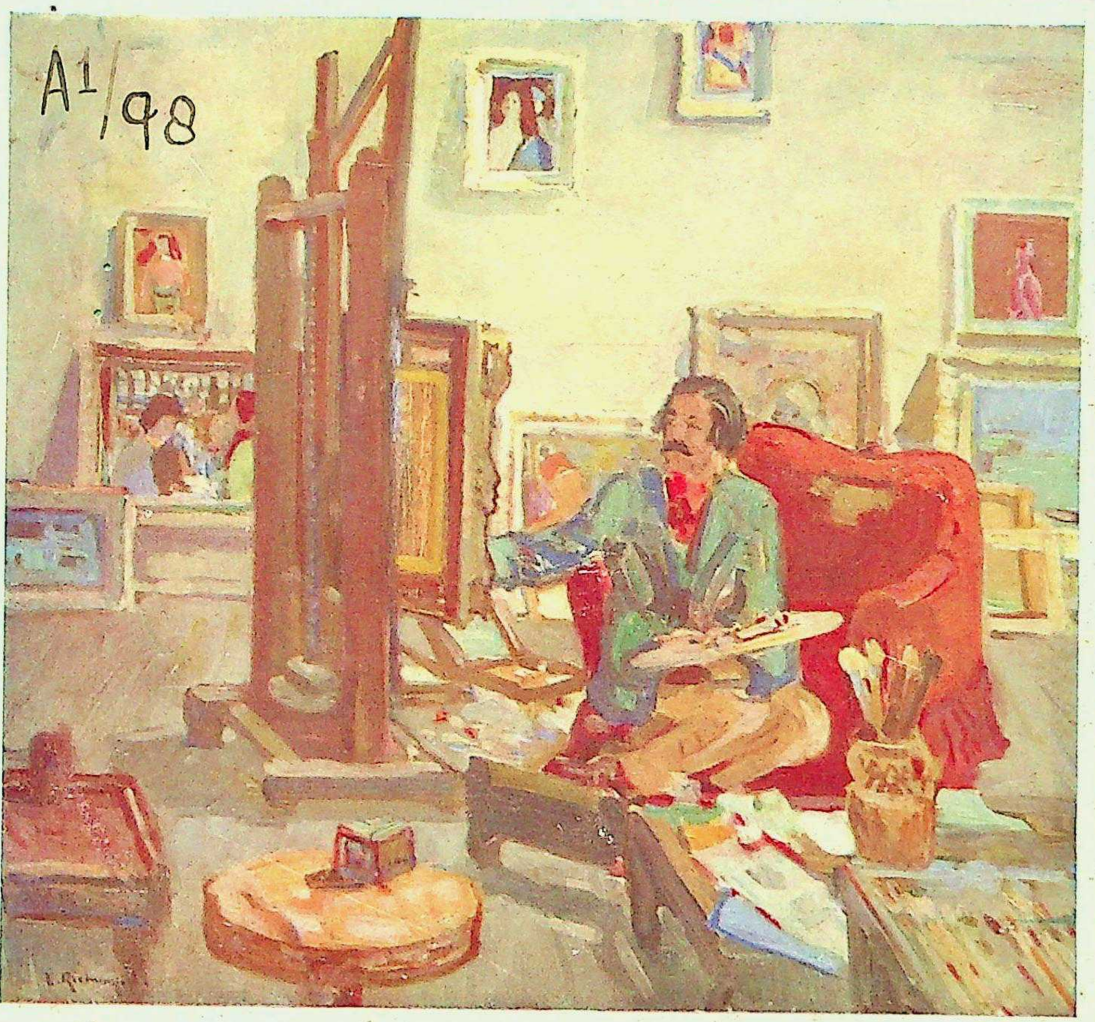
FROM THE SKETCH to the FINISHED PICTURE

Oil Painting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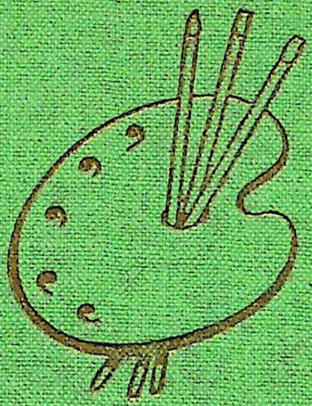

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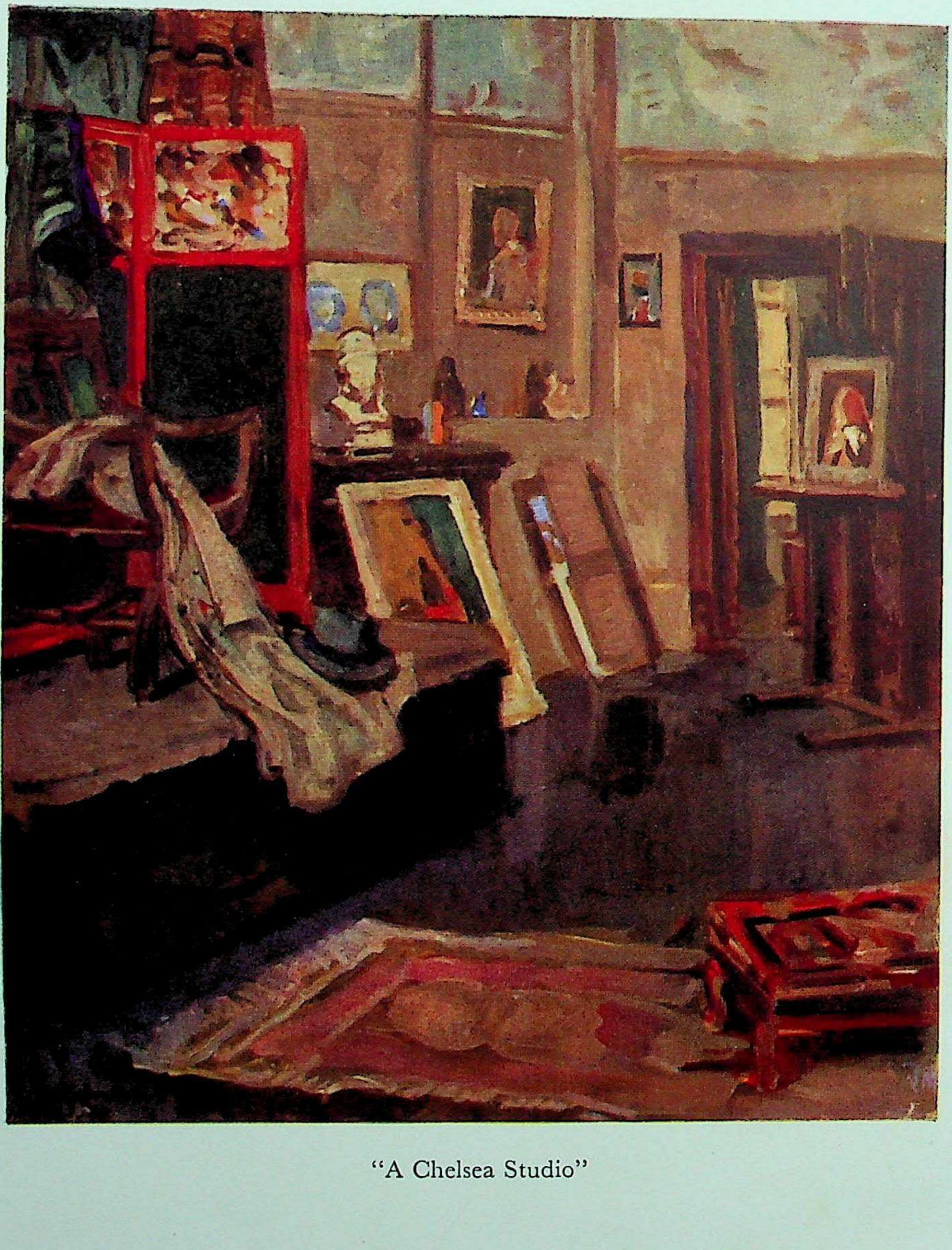

"A Chelsea Studio"

FROM THE SKETCH TO THE FINISHED PICTURE

OIL PAINTING

By

LEONARD RICHMOND, R.O.I., R.B.A.

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PREFACE

TO-DAY MORE PEOPLE than ever before are interested in painting. This may be due to the unrest and disturbance caused by two major wars, with the consequent desire of those who possess artistic instincts to devote their spare time to aesthetic pleasure and thus escape from a materialistic existence. Whatever the reason may be, there is no doubt that more and more people are finding that painting yields a deep satisfaction.

The beginner in landscape painting naturally has many obstacles to overcome before he can achieve technical success. There is not so much difficulty in oil painting as in other media, since mistakes can easily be remedied. A faulty passage of colour on a canvas, if scraped off with a palette-knife, can soon be cleaned with a turpentine rag. The surface is then ready for further painting. No other medium is so adaptable in this respect.

In writing this book, I have visualized all the possible difficulties which may beset the beginner—and sometimes even the experienced artist—and which have to be contended with before achieving the necessary technical ability so important for artistic expression.

Having had a great deal of personal experience in oil painting, and more particularly the valuable experience of helping students in their outdoor studies, I feel I am qualified to suggest the best method of guiding the eager student through different stages until the final goal is reached—when he can safely say: "Now I can paint anything I see, and can make the brush or palette-knife do precisely what I wish it to do."

This glowing optimism, based on logical and successful training in oil-painting technique, is the starting-point for personal expression in art, at which point the student can forge ahead in his career and enjoy all the artistic pleasures associated with it.

It is important to study the works of famous artists. For those who are unable to visit well-known picture galleries, there are nowadays many books displaying coloured reproductions of the best artists of different nations. In some ways the study of such reproductions is more profitable than a hasty visit to an art gallery, since a reproduction can be scrutinized at home and constantly referred to. Try to analyse and comprehend important features in the works of each artist. Remember that prejudice is not a healthy background. I have known some artists who have fallen by the wayside in their art career through their lack of a tolerant and appreciative attitude to the works of others. Remember also that there is no standing still in painting. One must go either forwards or backwards. To be stationary results in dull repetition.

The more artistic the student's temperament, the more necessary is it for him to acquire a logical knowledge of the varied items that go to the making of a good finished picture.

The author wishes all success to those who desire to paint freely without technical difficulties.

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Chapter I

MATERIALS AND THE ELEMENTS OF TECHNIQUE

THE SELECTION OF art materials is the first problem—it is always advisable to buy the best; they last longer and are thus cheaper than those of inferior quality. In addition, materials of good quality make it easier to acquire a good technique.

Canvas

As regards grain, there is a large variety of canvases, ranging from coarse to fine. The finer-grained canvas has the advantage that it can be painted over with thick pigment or with delicately adjusted pigment, whereas on a coarse-grained canvas it is difficult to suggest a smooth surface.

If time allows, it pays to prime one's own canvas, since a primed canvas when bought from the artists' colourman is often unsuitable for the particular technique which an artist may wish to adopt. One coat of size is enough to prime a closely-woven canvas. The canvas is more or less absorbent according to the thickness of the priming. The paint will be matt in appearance if the priming is thin, and less matt in proportion as the priming is thicker.

Size for priming must be quite pure, so that it will be non-injurious to colour and free from damp; it must also be sufficiently elastic not to crack. Gelatine is the best size for the purpose, as it costs very little and is pure in content. It is very quickly prepared by being dissolved in hot water. After the canvas has been well sized with gelatine, a single layer of white lead can be lightly painted over the dry size. This makes an excellent priming. A coarse-fibred canvas needs a second layer of white lead, the first coat being allowed to dry thoroughly before the second is applied.

Formalin sprayed on the back of the canvas is sometimes used by artists as a preservative against damp.

Masonite

A useful and economical substitute for canvas is the material known as "Masonite." This is invaluable for preliminary sketches and for experimental work, and indeed I frequently use it for finished paintings. It has a smooth surface on one side, the other side being coarsely canvas-grained. I prefer the smooth surface since I can build up my own paint texture on it. The coarse grain absorbs too much oil pigment, and to cover the surface takes a considerable time.

Palette

Most artists use large palettes, which have the obvious advantage that they allow more room to mix colours and to try experiments with various colour blends. There is also a sense of freedom from the irritating feeling caused by working in a restricted space.

The palette should be well balanced and light in weight. For indoor work a very large palette need not be held in the hand: it can be placed on a chair or stool adjoining the easel. The circular palette is generally used for indoor painting, and a square or rectangular palette for out of doors. This palette fits comfortably into the average oil sketching box.

Colours

With regard to the layout of oil colours on a palette, it saves confusion if the colours are spread out in gradated tints from light to dark. Flake white is the first of the series followed by lemon and other yellows, and so on until finishing with ivory black.

Fig. 1 shows the layout of colours in their proper order. Notice that with the exception of vermilion each colour is repeated several times. This was done so as to keep the colours pure and ready for use during the painting of a picture. As white is continually being used for picture painting, a large quantity of white paint on the palette is essential.

It is easier—and more effective—to use few colours, whether for landscape, figure, or still-life pictures. As shown in Fig. 1, plenty of space should be left for colour mixing. The ten colours on this palette (including white) are as follows: flake white, yellow ochre, light chrome, deep chrome, vermilion, viridian, alizarin crimson, deep ultramarine blue, burnt sienna, and ivory black. Yellow ochre is the most important of all yellows and plays a prominent part in picture painting. I therefore place it first on the palette, adjoining the white pigment.

There appears to be no end to the possibilities of colour mixing. For further information on this subject consult my book *The Technique of Colour Mixing* (Pitman), in which I have given a sound foundation as a basis for experimental colour mixing.

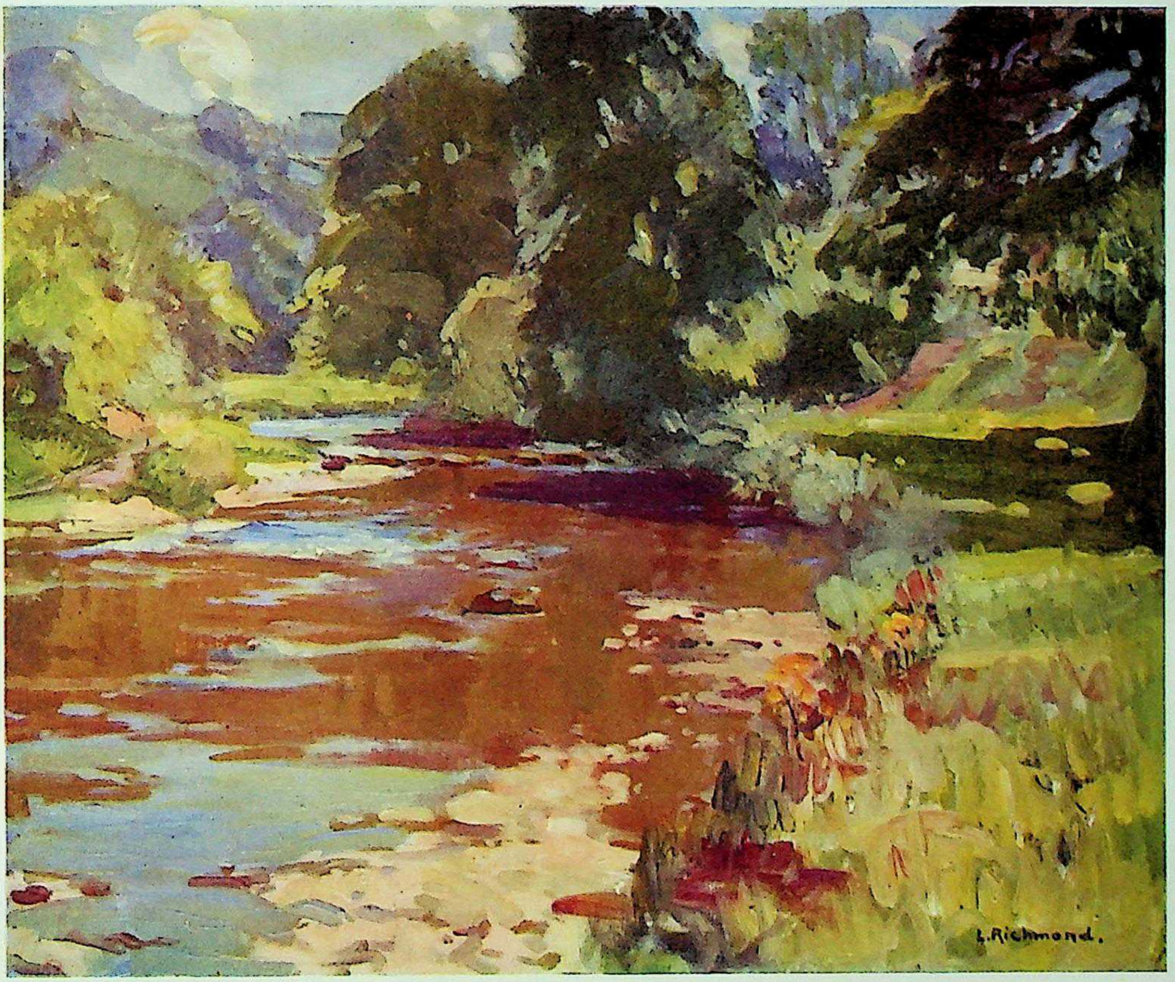

PLATE I

"The River Barle, Withypool, Somerset"

(20 in. × 24 in.)

Brushes

The brush chiefly used for oil painting is the hog's-hair brush. To acquire the feeling of oil painting it is probably best for the student to get hog's-hair brushes square in shape, so that when decisive touches of the brush are made on the canvas there will be left a clear-cut edging of the pigment, as seen in Fig. 2. Another useful brush is known as the "filbert," which has the same qualities as the square brush, but does not leave such a decided edge. It is a compromise between the square and the round brush.

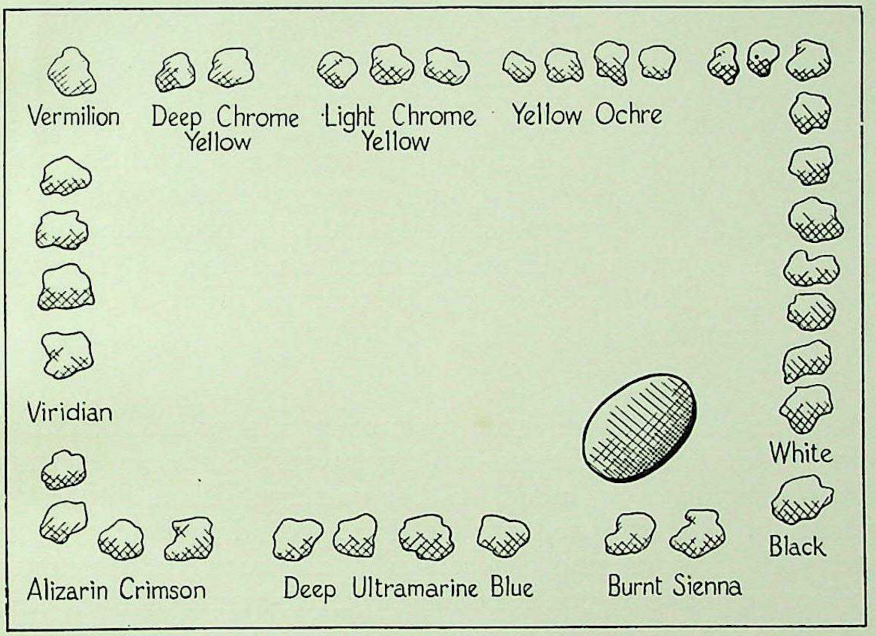

Fig. 1. Palette with Colour Arrangement

Between ten and fifteen brushes are necessary as a preliminary equipment for painting, from very small brushes up to those an inch and a half wide. The student will have no difficulty in finding out which are the most appropriate ones to use and, whatever brushes are eventually decided upon, the importance of handling should always be kept in mind.

Occasionally sable brushes must be used for delicate detail, but caution is necessary with the use of sable or small brushes in the first stages of painting; in fact students are well-advised to keep away from very small brushes for at least a year, so that their handling may be broad and convincing. There is little difficulty in the portraying of finicking detail, but it is not so easy to master the broader method. On the other hand, in cases where detail is essential, sable brushes are extremely useful for rendering such objects as the delicately-shaped branches of trees or shrubs, the rigging of ships, architectural details, and so on.

Oil brushes must be kept perfectly clean. The most economical way (so as to save paint rags) is to squeeze out the oil pigment on a piece of newspaper, then dip the brushes in paraffin or turpentine substitute, afterwards drying them with a clean rag. Finally, rub the brushes into a bar of ordinary soap, and then stir them well in very hot water. Repeat the process until they have no trace or smell of paraffin or turpentine substitute.

Special care must be taken with sable brushes, since otherwise their useful life will be short. After the colour has been squeezed out with a soft rag the brush should be well washed in warm water with plenty of soap; every vestige of oil colour must be eradicated. Finally the brush should be swilled vigorously in clean, warm water, so that there is no trace of soapy water left in the sable hairs. The brush can then be rounded off at the tip by turning it gently in the mouth.

Palette-knife

A long, flexible knife is essential for mixing colours and for cleaning the colours from the palette at the end of a day's work. Some two or three other palette-knives should be included, so that painting with a palette-knife can be indulged in. The palette-knife for direct painting on canvas must be flexible enough for squeezing the colour in any required direction. Most artists' colourmen have a good selection of palette-knives that are used solely for the purpose of picture making. An example of palette-knife painting is shown in Fig. 3.

Media

As there is plenty of oil mixed with colour pigment in the tubes, it is not necessary to use much additional medium. Pure spirits of turpentine makes an admirable mixture for painting, since it evaporates, and consequently can do no damage to the permanency of colour pigments. A little linseed oil, diluted with turpentine, gives a more luminous surface to a picture.

A picture which needs more than one coat of paint can benefit if the first stage is rendered with turpentine. Then, for the final painting, copal medium mixed with turpentine makes the picture look more brilliant.

The Methods of Applying the Paint

The first example in Fig. 2, on the top left-hand side, shows oil-paint brush marks at varying angles. They indicate the decisive technique so

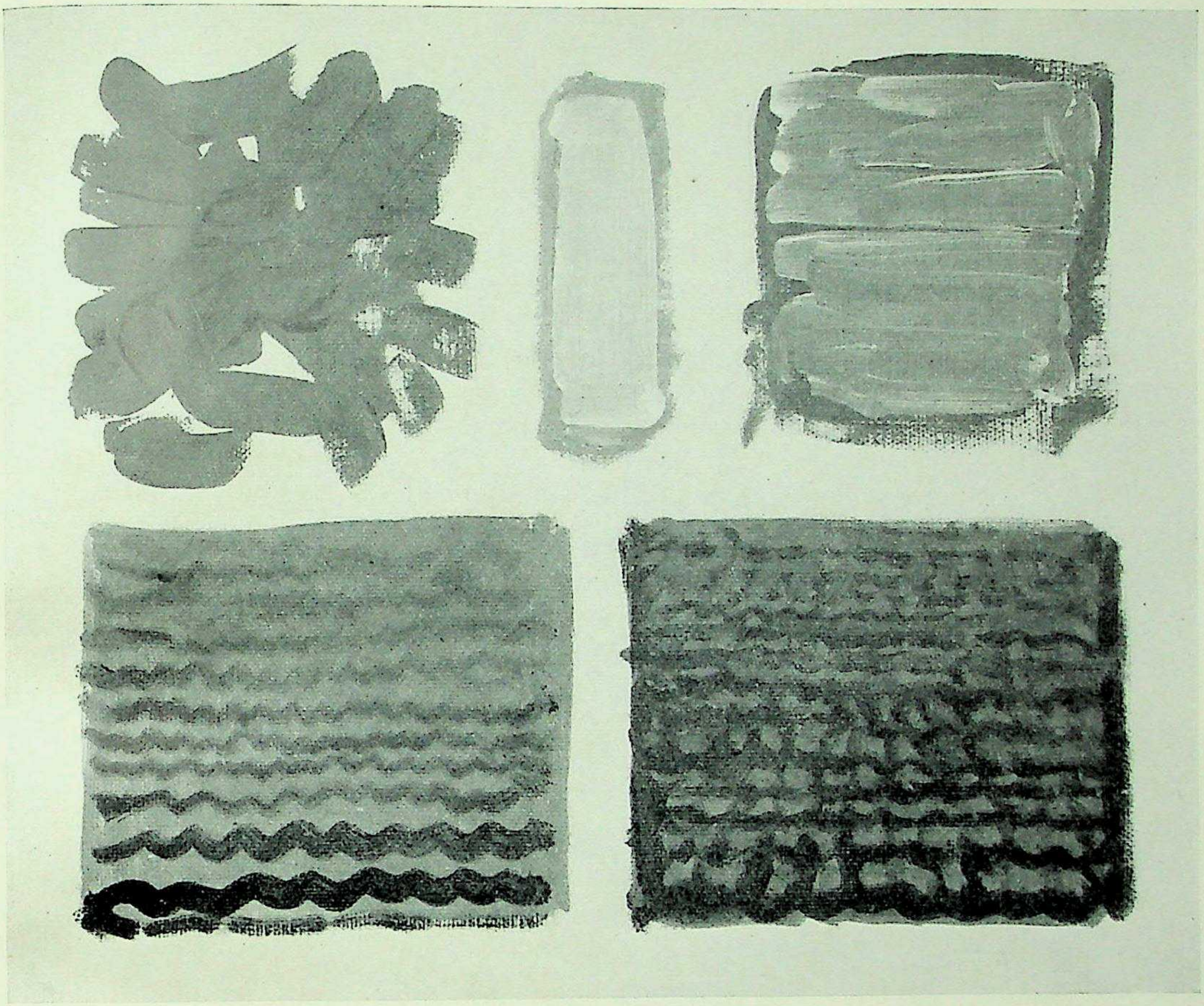

Fig. 2. First Series of Demonstrations

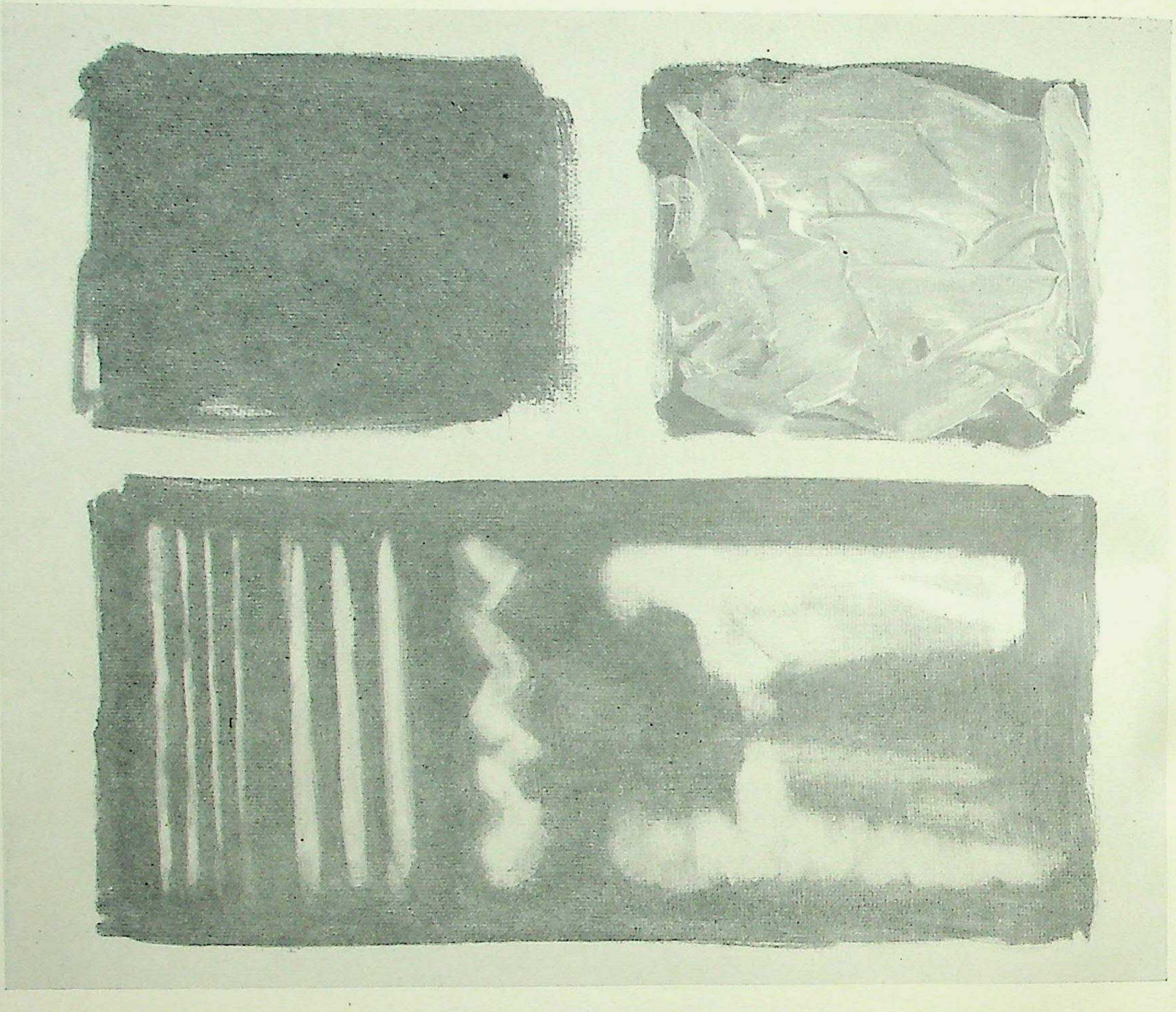

Fig. 3. Second Series of Demonstrations

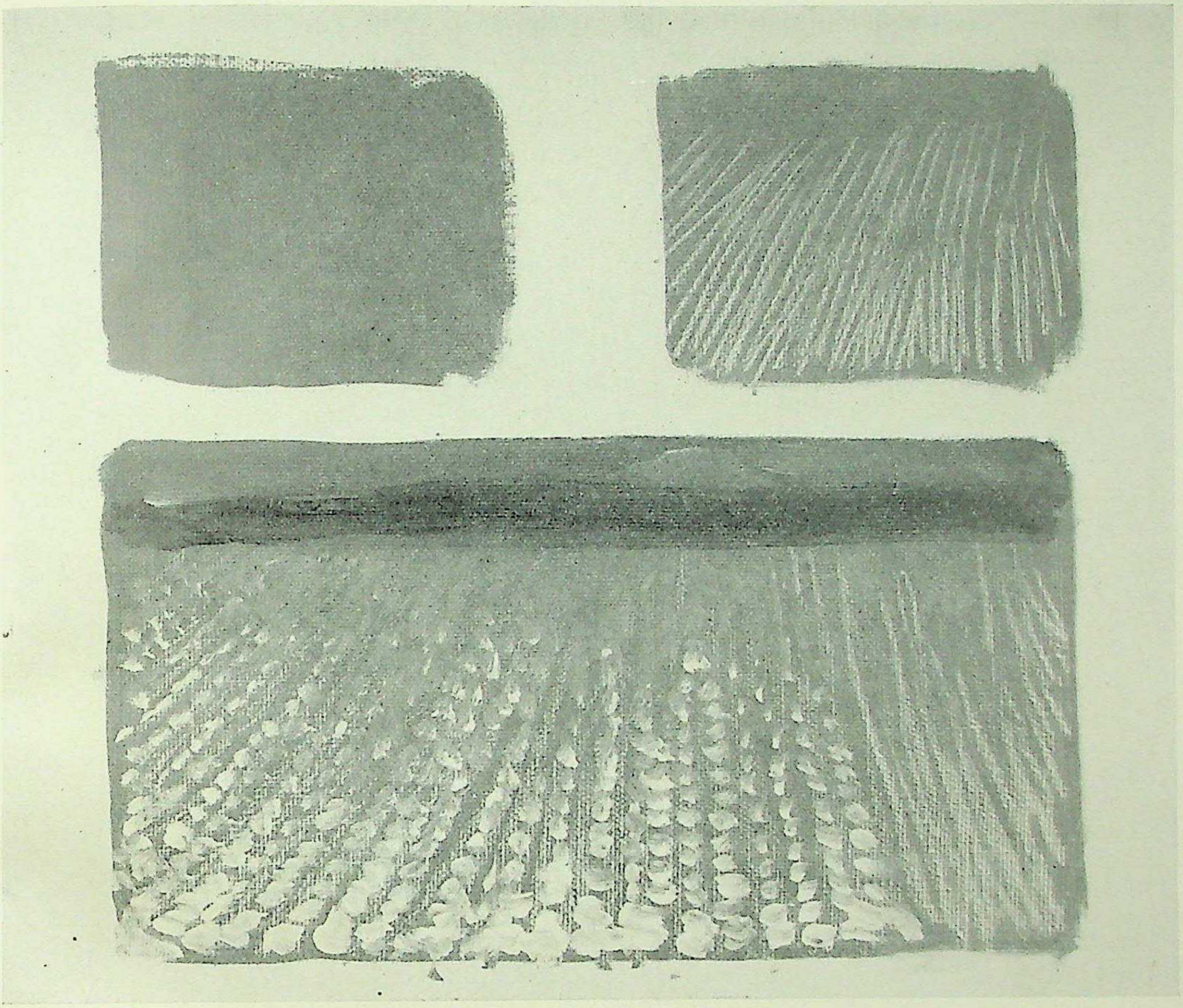

Fig. 4. Third Series of Demonstrations

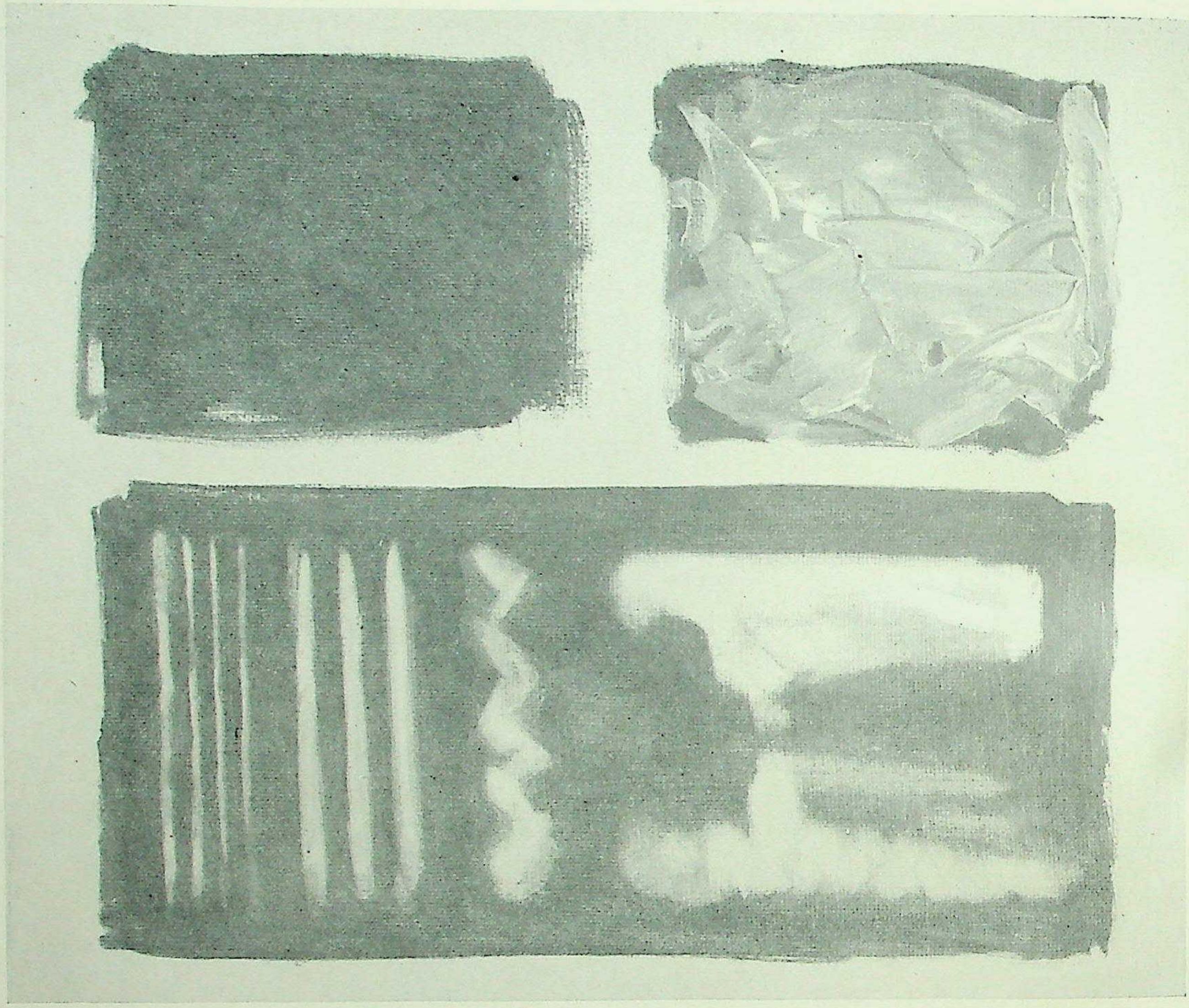

Fig. 3. Second Series of Demonstrations

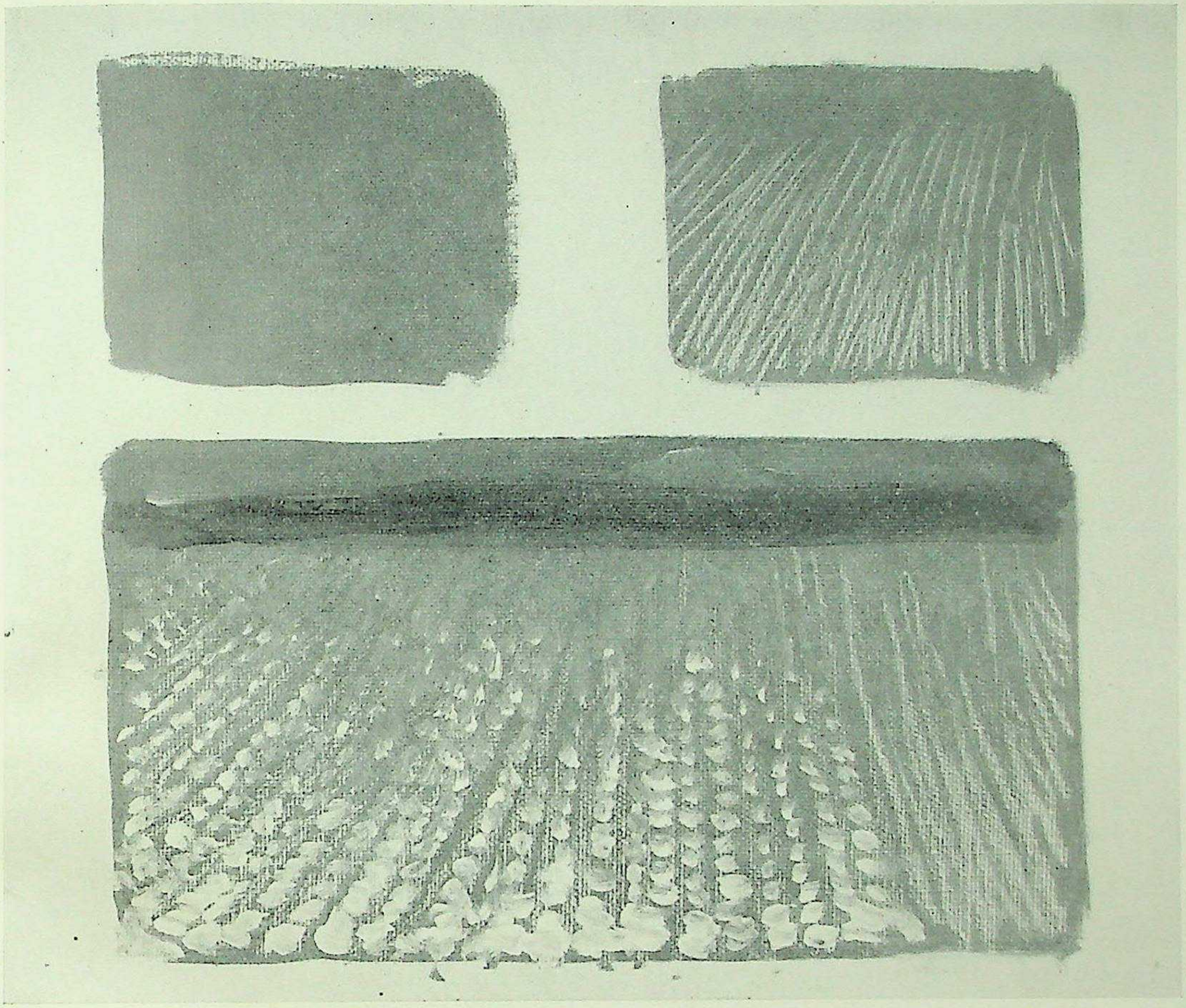

Fig. 4. Third Series of Demonstrations

essential in oil painting. The paint-brush should be well loaded with oil colour before it is applied to the canvas. This helps the student to paint with confidence. To paint thinly in oil colours is sometimes necessary, but not often. Such painting usually lacks sparkle and is liable to form a dull, uninspired surface. John Constable, R.A., in some of his oil-colour landscapes evolved a most interesting surface vibration resulting solely from his technical ability to handle thick oil pigment with success.

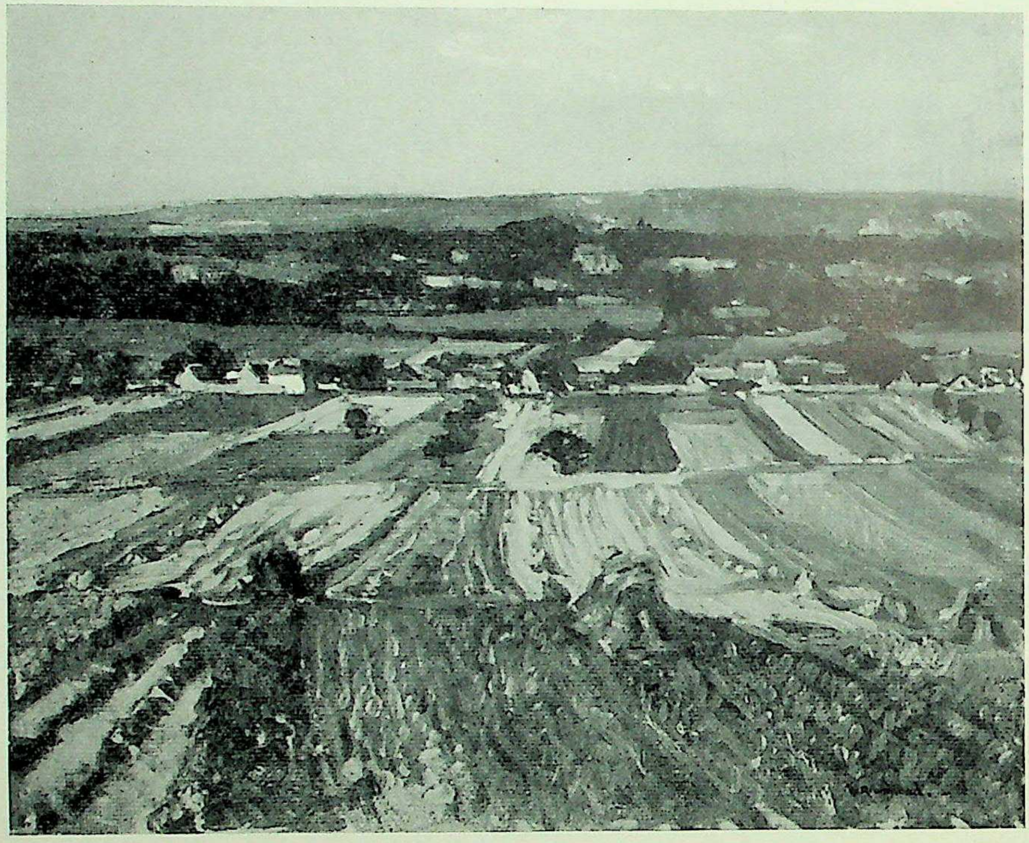

Fig. 5. "Cornfields near Les Andelys, France"
(20 in. × 24 in.) (Exhibited Royal Academy)

The example in the top centre shows the result of painting pure white on top of a light-tinted ground. The wet ground modified the brilliancy of white paint. Any colour painted over a wet surface always absorbs some of the ground colour underneath.

The top right example is similar to the previous one. The ground tint is darker in tone than in the centre demonstration. The horizontal brush lines were painted with white and thickly applied over the wet ground. Thinly painted white over a dark ground is ineffective.

The two lower examples demonstrate a feeling of movement. In each instance the ground colour was painted quite flat, with no variation in tone. In the bottom left example horizontal lines with a wave-like motion were painted over the wet ground tint. Pure black was used at the lower end, and gradually lightened when approaching the distance or higher portion of the demonstration.

The last example was painted in a similar manner, with the addition of receding lines crossing horizontal lines approximately at right angles. Both of these examples suggest texture without using thick paint.

In Fig. 3 the flat tone of the example on the top left-hand side was also used for the ground tint of the other two studies. The top right example shows the effect of palette-knife technique on a wet ground. This was done with an ordinary palette-knife, generally used for scraping oil colour from the palette. Plenty of white oil paint was necessary for each flexible pressure of the knife on the canvas.

No additional paint was required for the lower demonstration. The vertical lines on the left-hand side were made with a stiff hog's-hair brush continually cleaned with turpentine so as to lift off the surface paint. A small brush sufficed for the thin vertical lines on the left and a larger brush for the thicker lines.

The zigzag vertical movement, as well as the landscape showing a suggestive composition of sky, trees, and water, were done with an ordinary linen rag dipped in pure turpentine, followed by wiping off the prepared ground colour where required.

The three demonstrations in Fig. 4 indicate a method of suggesting lines by scraping off the surface paint with a penknife. The first example on the top left-hand side shows the flat ground colour used as a basis for the two remaining demonstrations. For the second example, the lines were made starting with a penknife from the lower part and working towards the higher.

In the third example the same procedure was adopted as in the second, but after the surface paint had been scraped off white dots were painted along the lines indicated by the penknife. The lower dots are larger than those higher or further away. The smaller ones finally merge into the distance.

On the right-hand side of this demonstration can be seen the effect of line treatment before the white paint is added.

The black and white illustration, Fig. 5, entitled "Cornfields near Les

Andelys, France" is, to a large extent, based on the demonstrations in Fig. 4. The receding lines of the cornfields leading to the distant landscape were painted methodically. The foreground showed clearly the value of previous knowledge in an attempt at this sort of subject. Instead of dots, as in Fig. 4, small touches of vertical, light-tinted paint helped to indicate the stubble associated with cornfields at the end of the harvest.

Chapter II

COMPOSITION AND COLOUR VALUES; BALANCED TONE VALUES

THE COLOUR REPRODUCTION entitled "River Barle, Withypool, Somerset" (Plate I) is taken from an oil painting that was done entirely out of doors. Previously, I had made several attempts at the same subject, none of which gave me any satisfaction, from either a compositional or a colour standpoint. On the other hand, I was gaining knowledge through my failures—an important discipline to a serious artist.

The advantage of my earlier struggles can be seen in the coloured reproduction. The first colour sketches not only lacked pleasing compositions, but they also lacked unity of tone. The picture was painted in midsummer, which is probably the most difficult time of the year for landscape painting, demanding close attention to the varying shades of green.

With regard to the spacing of the trees in the middle distance, considerable thought was given to their position in the general design. The sky occupies a small space in the picture; yet just enough to show the relation of the tone of the sky when compared to the tone of the distant hill on the left, and also to the dark trees in the middle distance. The subject was painted fairly early in the morning while there was still dew on the grass and trees. This, together with the effect of bright sunlight, produced a delightful sparkle, especially on the wet grass. In that respect, the textural surface of pigment is most helpful to oil painters.

To bring the receding planes or tones in the picture into friendly relation with one another, I deliberately used warmer colours in the grass, as seen towards the right in the immediate foreground. The contrast between this warm-tinted ground and the cooler or more bluish colour spreading towards the distance creates a valuable artistic asset.

The black and white demonstration in Fig. 6 suggests a constructive method of painting grass, similar to the meadow on the right-hand side of the coloured reproduction of the River Barle. The vertical lines in this illustration help to indicate the perspective value of long grass, as they recede from the foreground into the distance. The vertical lines are taller in the immediate front and less high as they recede, so that in the distance they gradate into smaller vertical shapes and end up in a series of dots. This arbitrary treatment is always useful when painting grass or similar material.

The lower black and white demonstration follows out the same principle as above. The solidity of this example, though painted with freedom, retains the methodical approach already demonstrated.

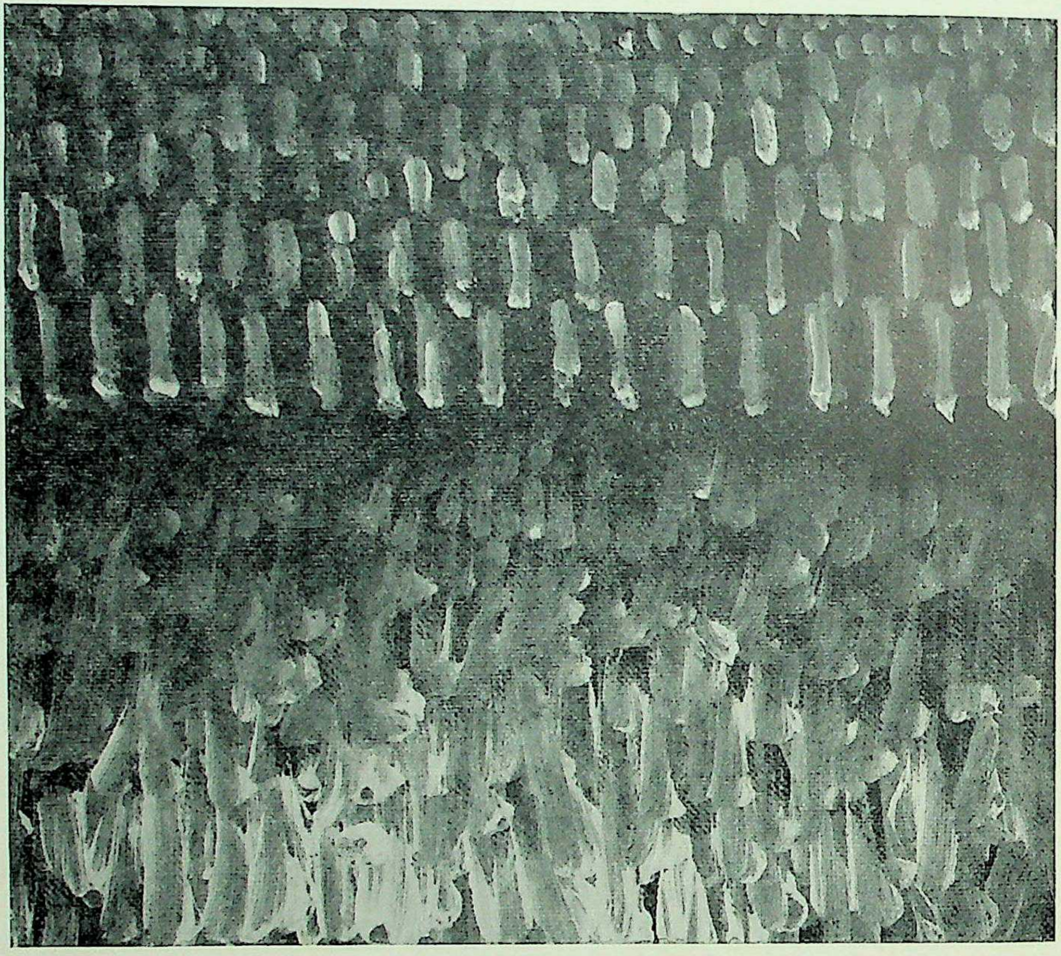

Fig. 6. A Practical Method for Painting Grass

In the colour reproduction (Plate I), there is a deep shadow on the grass on the right-hand side at the foot of the trees. The method of painting this is quite simple. Paint the whole of the meadow with thin dark green made with a mixture of viridian, deep ultramarine blue, a little pale chrome, and flake white. Then paint the grass exposed to sunlight and leave untouched the horizontal grass shadow. Later, a half-tone tint of local colour should be painted on the dark shadow surface, so that it retains a natural affinity with the surrounding, sunlit grass.

If a delicate grass shadow is required, the same method can be utilized by painting lighter-coloured brush strokes on the surface of the required shadow.

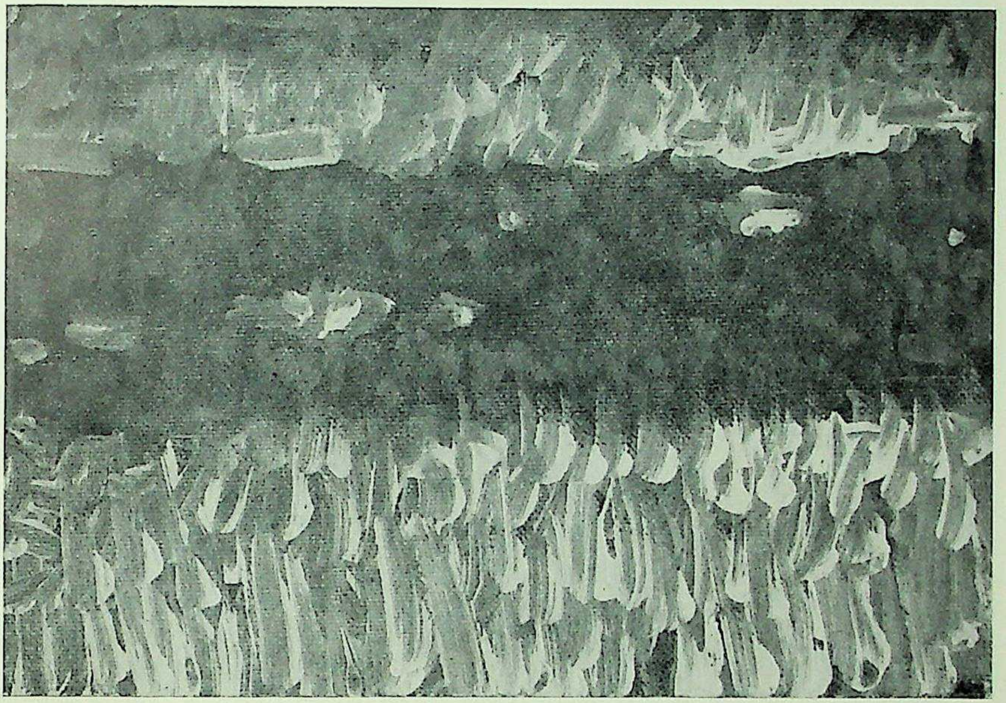

Fig. 7. How to Suggest a Shadow on Grass

The black and white demonstration in Fig. 7, which suggests a shadow on the grass, is based on the same method as already described in relation to the colour reproduction of the River Barle.

Many students complain that they find trees difficult to paint out of doors. This difficulty can be readily overcome by a practical method of approach. For that purpose I have included two black and white examples.

The trees in Fig. 8, which bear some relationship to the trees seen in the colour reproduction, were in the first instance painted flat. The same applies to the lighter-toned trees behind. This typifies one of the many advantages of oil painting—a medium so adaptable for getting practical results.

In Fig. 9, showing the second stage, the formation of the trees takes on a more definite pattern. It was accomplished by painting touches of light between the foliage. The advantage of this is obvious as it helps to express the characteristic shapes of the trees.

In England one can see and enjoy the dark, rich colour-tones of certain trees, such as the elm, yew, fir, etc. This, coupled with a certain amount of atmospheric mist peculiar to British soil, helps to produce a harmonious sense of unity.

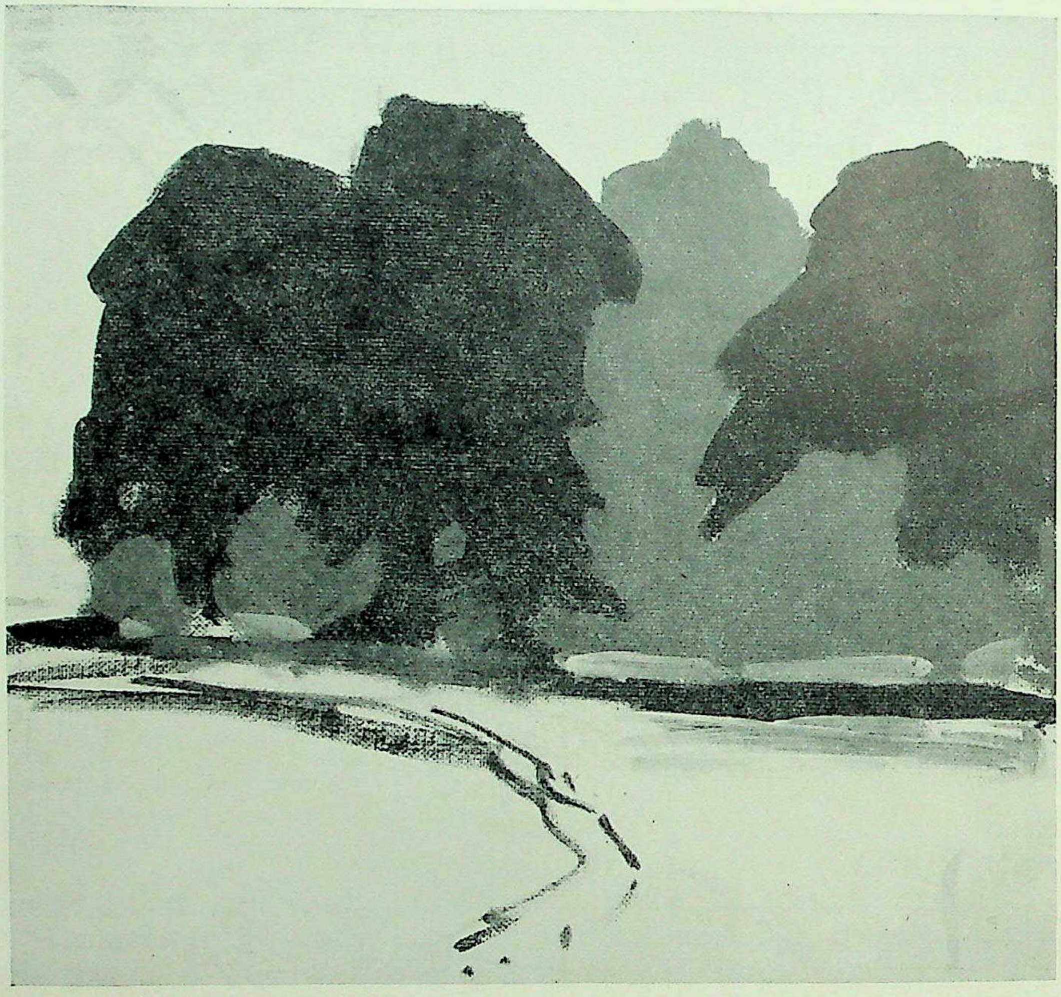

Fig. 8. Simple Tree Painting—First Stage

Some time ago, when I was staying in the heart of the Canadian Rockies —where the air is very clear—I decided to go to a certain point which appeared quite close from my hotel and was easily visible, being about half-way up a mountain-side adjoining Lake Louise. After an early breakfast, I got out my sketching gear and, carrying sandwiches for a midday meal, I set out on my journey. I walked for hours and hours, and it was not until

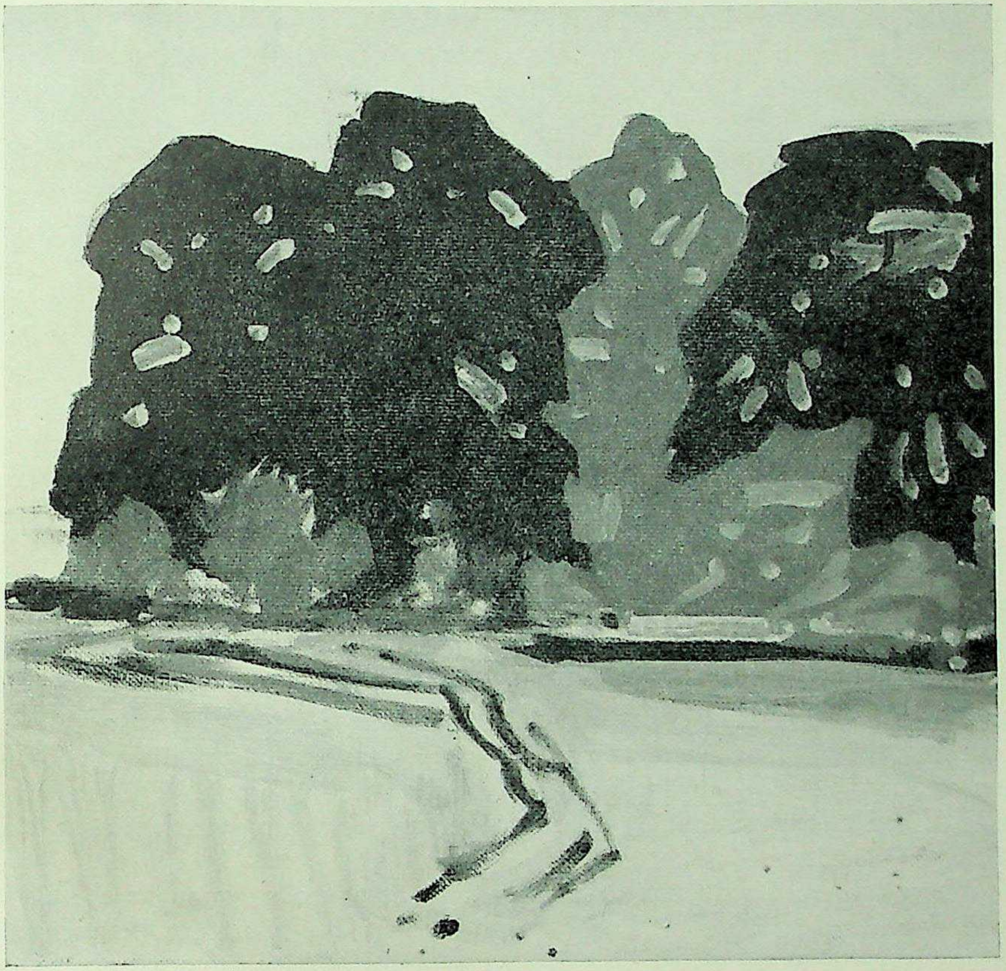

Fig. 9. Simple Tree Painting—Finished Study

about three o'clock in the afternoon that I reached the coveted spot—with only a few minutes left to sketch. I decided to return at once to the Lake Louise Hotel so as to get back before night set in. I mention this as an illustration of the deceptive clarity of atmosphere in Canada when compared to the more diffused or misty conditions of the British Isles.

To paint running water is a problem that, especially for the beginner, is not easily solved. With the particular river in my Somerset picture the difficulties of representational painting, chiefly owing to shallow water, are greater than in the average deep river subject. The colour of the soil below the shallow water in this district is warm in tone, showing a distinct amber tint. This in itself creates a difficulty in representing the flat surface of water, so that one has to be extremely observant to get correct tones of light and dark; otherwise the all-over horizontal surface of the river would be lacking in harmony.

For the dark amber tinted portion of the river I used burnt sienna mixed with white, yellow ochre, deep chrome yellow, and a very small portion of purple. This last colour was made with a mixture of alizarin crimson, ultramarine, and white. The introduction of purple, mixed with the above colours, helped to remove any suggestion of crudity in the general colour scheme. The colours used for the reflection of the sky on the water were deep ultramarine blue mixed with white, together with a small quantity of yellow ochre, viridian, and a little vermilion. Since blue was in this instance the predominant colour, other necessary colours had to be carefully mixed with the blue so as to get refinement without losing the original colour. The pebbles or light tinted matter adjoining the banks of the river made a most useful contrast to the surrounding water.

A well-known artist once asked me what colours I mixed to get certain greens that he had noticed in my painting, and I found it difficult to give a direct answer because one usually paints with an instinctive sense of colour—based on years of experience—especially when absorbed in painting from nature. A large number of different greens can be made through the mixture of various tints. A practical method is to use viridian only as a basic colour, then to add a little white, yellow ochre, and a touch of black. The student is well advised to experiment by mixing other colours, using viridian as a basic tint.

When I have discovered a suitable subject to paint, such as the River Barle, Withypool (Plate I), I always find how cleverly nature balances the various items that go to the making of a pictorial subject, not only in the grouping of trees, hills, rivers, and so on, but also in the arrangement of colour. For example, the light-toned clouds seen at the top of the reproduction show a similar colour on a small scale on the extreme right, behind the foliage of the overhanging branches of a tree. From that point of contact the eye is led down to the yellowish-tinted pebbles by the waterside adjoining the banks of the river. The most difficult problem of all was to get the correct tone value of the dark trees in the central part of the picture as seen against the trees and hill immediately behind. The trees and bush shape on the left side of the painting, adjoining the bank, although lighter in colour, are yet correct in tone value, as their warmer colours separate them from the background material.

One point that must not be overlooked is the colour of the sky seen through the foliage of trees. This should be deeper in tone than the sky outside the general silhouette of trees. If one painted that part of the sky which can be seen through the foliage of the trees in exactly the same colour as the surrounding sky, the result would be incorrect and lacking in harmony of tone.

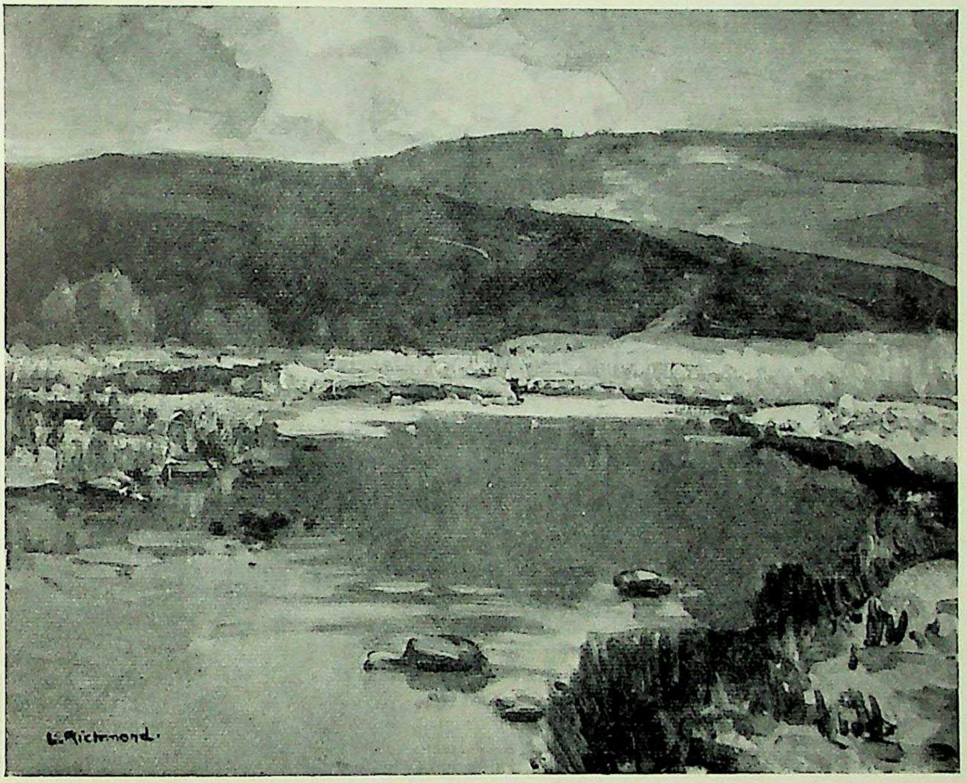

Fig. 10. "Moving Clouds"
(16 in. × 20 in.)

To paint the effect of sparkle and vibration caused by bright sunlight on damp or wet material such as grass or trees, a few touches of light-tinted colour (almost white in appearance) in an appropriate setting will stimulate the surrounding colours with a more lively expression. The colours used for the foreground grass on the right were yellow ochre, light and deep chrome, viridian, and a little black.

Beginners in landscape painting cannot do better than remember that the late Adrian Stokes, R.A., described yellow ochre as the "daily bread of artists." Yellow ochre is not only harmonious in relation to other colours, but often adds distinction when mixed with other tints. Chrome or cadmium yellow must, of course, be utilized for certain bright effects, but an overdose of these colours will cheapen your painting. It is only through experience that the brighter yellows can be used to artistic advantage.

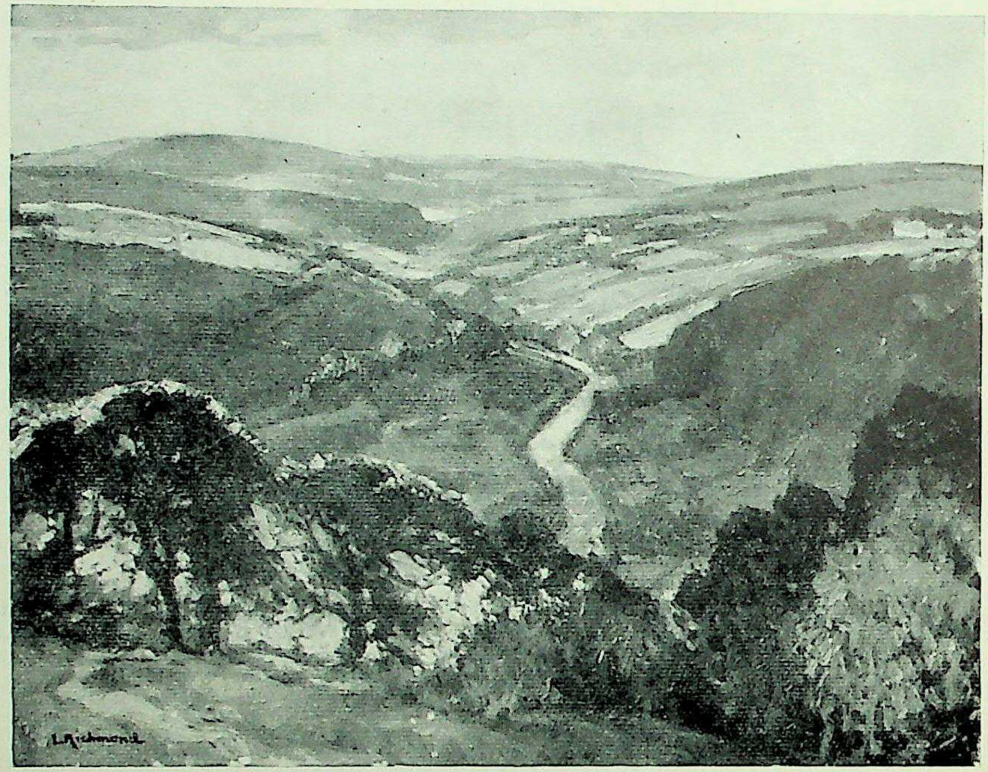

Fig. 11. "An Exmoor Valley, Somerset"
(32 in. × 40 in.)

When painting in oils from nature, it is better to use a brush fully charged with pigment rather than attempt thin colour, since oil painting is fundamentally a robust medium. In that respect it does not compare with water colour painting, which relies chiefly on transparent, watery technique. For oil painting, therefore, one should be courageous enough to handle the medium with confidence, keeping its textural quality.

The two illustrations entitled "Moving Clouds" and "Exmoor Valley, Somerset" (Figs. 10 and 11) were, like the coloured reproduction, painted out of doors direct from nature. The "Moving Clouds" illustration was chosen chiefly because of the actual design, which I saw from the parapet of a rustic bridge. It was fairly easy to paint direct from nature as the subject left nothing to the imagination, although the effect of tone did not last for quite an hour. During the later stage of this painting I had to remember the effect seen in the first hour. The dark reflections in the water were, in the first instance, painted entirely flat with thin pigment in one tone only. This was made with ultramarine blue, white, a little ivory black, and yellow ochre. Painting with thin pigment made it comparatively easy to brush in other colours on the preparatory wet ground without losing the breadth of tone. My experience of the practical use of yellow ochre helped considerably in the light part of the water in the immediate foreground. Here I used yellow ochre, white, a little black, and deep ultramarine blue. Occasionally, one has to introduce a very small portion of burnt sienna when yellow ochre fails to get a certain warmth of tone on a light colour surface. For the gleam of sparkling light on the distant water about half-way up the picture, I mixed a very small portion of yellow ochre with plenty of white on the wet painted ground.

To paint clouds, particularly quickly-moving clouds, is no easy proposition because they change their formation or contours so quickly that one has to be exceedingly alert, and to paint rapidly, to obtain a natural rendering. The pigment was piled on quite thickly along the banks and further distance beyond the river, thus helping through textural contrast to make the thinly painted water appear liquid and transparent. The distant moor on the right-hand side is colder in colour than the warm-tinted, yet low-toned, adjoining moor that spreads across the landscape.

This picture was painted in the late autumn when the bracken becomes rich and deep in colour values. On the left-hand side there is a suggestion of trees in shadow, but a little lighter than the moorland behind. Attention was given to the exact tone value of these.

"Exmoor Valley, Somerset" (Fig. 11) indicates a clear-cut composition. The foreground of dark trees stands out effectively as a silhouette against the lighter middle distance. Beyond that the landscape merges into the sky without losing any of its inherent structural formation.

Chapter III

OUTDOOR STUDY AND THE FINISHED PICTURE

The definition or analysis of the word "art" as given in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* begins with these words: "Skill, especially human skill, as opposed to nature; skilful execution as an object in itself; skill applied to imitation and design, as in painting, etc. . . . ; knack; cunning; stratagem," and so on. Under the heading of Fine Arts it also says: "Those in which mind and imagination are chiefly concerned."

"Human skill as *opposed* to nature" is perhaps not altogether a happy phrase, especially in connection with landscape painting. Personally I find nature extremely co-operative in assisting me to build up a picture from the admirable source she provides. I much prefer the latter statement of this dictionary, viz.: "Those [arts] in which mind and imagination are chiefly concerned." By using as basic material the great storehouse of information supplied by nature, one's mind and imagination can then be allowed to develop so as to express one's own personality. Students of art, irrespective of environment or lessons in different forms of art, *must*, if they wish to achieve a worth-while recognition, have something to say which is based solely on their own mental outlook.

In this chapter I want to try to show my own reaction to pictorial composition as seen in the coloured reproduction entitled "An English Landscape"(Plate II). The black and white illustration (Fig. 12) is a study executed in oil colours, painted direct from nature in about three hours. By comparing this outdoor sketch with the coloured reproduction, it is easy to discover the alterations that were made in painting the finished picture from the naturalistic example. For instance, in the coloured reproduction the definition of various forms is more concrete, more obvious, particularly where light and shadow are concerned. The two buildings in the valley stand out clearly because of the emphasis given to deeper tone in the triangular part of their structure. The hills or moorland distance are also more positive in statement against the tone of the sky.

Theoretically, the tone of the darker side of the two buildings is incorrect in values. As they are situated a considerable distance from the foreground they should be lighter in tone, but I purposely disobeyed the usual routine of correctness in that respect, for the sole purpose of gaining a piquant contrast to the surrounding naturalistic material.

The vivid contrast thus obtained is useful in helping to give a general feeling of artistic atmosphere over the whole picture. The emphasis given to the small buildings also helps to suggest a sense of scale to the general composition. Had they been painted, say, twice as large as the original conception, the surrounding scenery would have been dwarfed in comparison and the serene spaciousness of this landscape would no longer be noticeable.

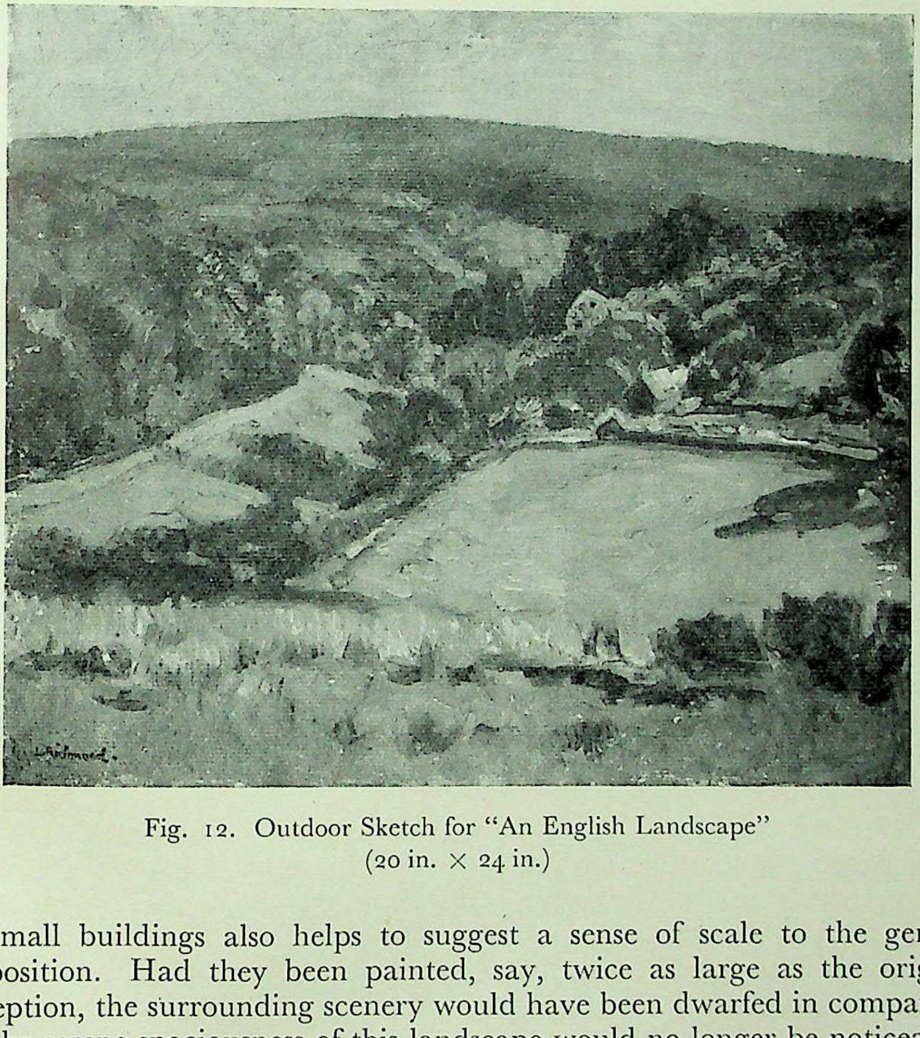

Fig. 12. Outdoor Sketch for "An English Landscape"
(20 in. × 24 in.)

On looking at the coloured reproduction one can see that in painting the trees immediately above the buildings, which spread to the left and right respectively, I was still concerned with the atmospheric feeling of the picture. This is chiefly attained by the elimination of detail—an important item in pictorial painting.

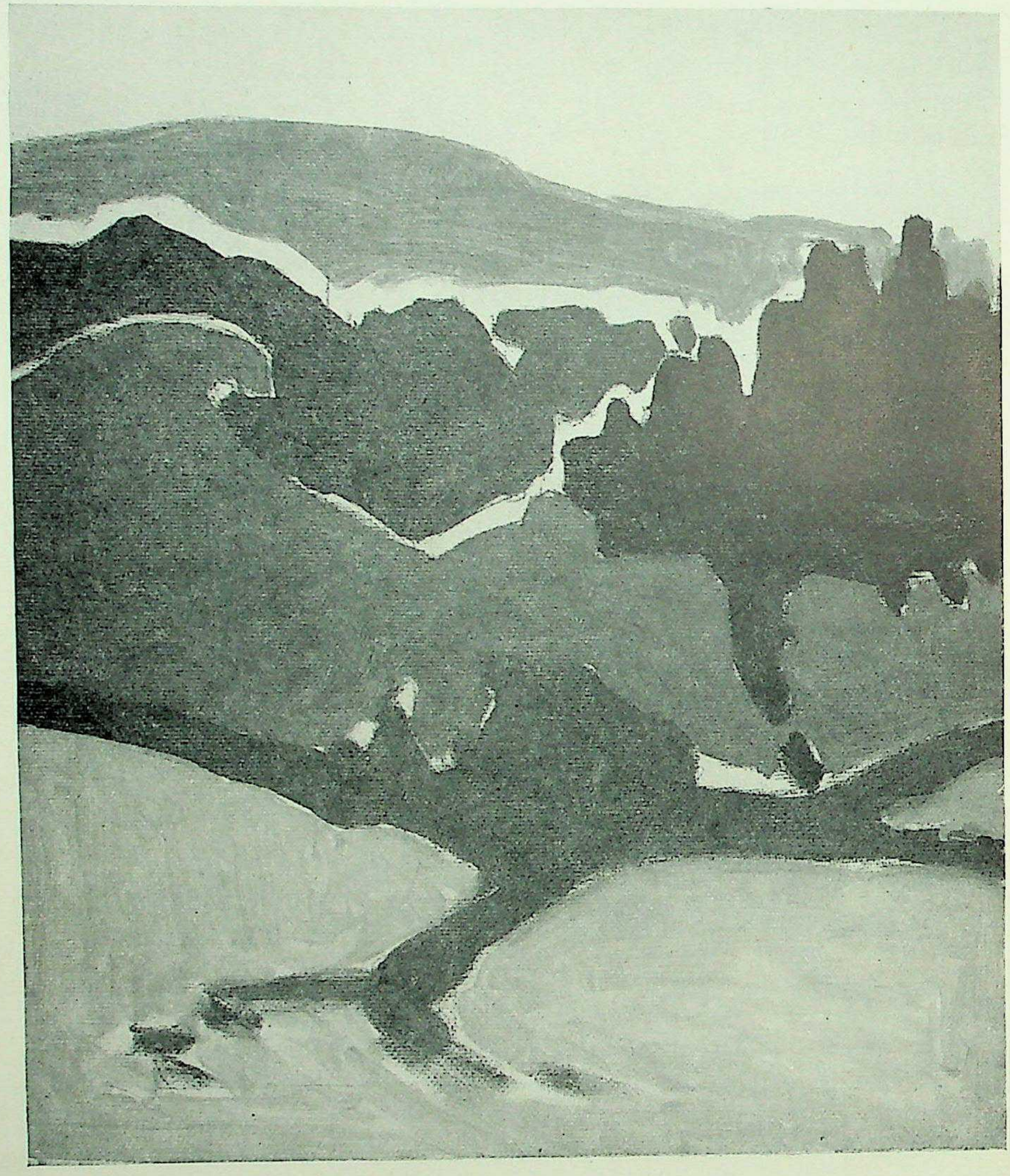

Fig. 13. Painting Trees—First Stage

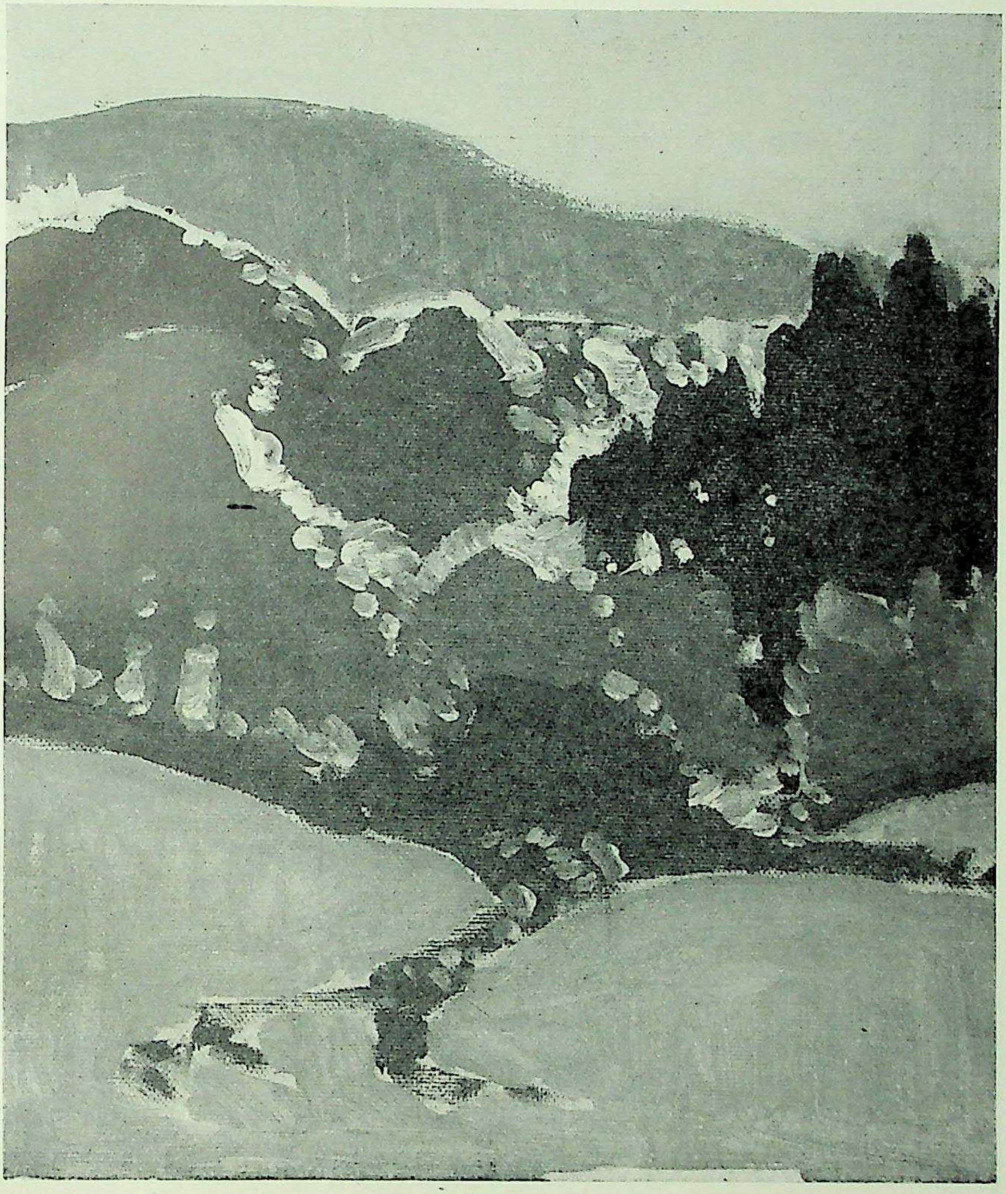

Fig. 14. Painting Trees—Final Stage

Special attention was given to the various trees so as to make the general pattern more telling than in the original outdoor sketch. There is one drawback that nearly always arises unless one is very careful when painting indoors from sketches made out of doors: the studio picture is apt to lack the essential charm and atmosphere of the direct painting from nature. Conversely, the outdoor sketch often lacks a comprehensive composition. It is, therefore, desirable to make an amalgamation of both to achieve artistic success, but this can only be done, with real hard work, by making a very large number of colour sketches supported by a great deal of detailed pencil drawing. Students are strongly advised not to attempt studio landscape pictures from sketches until they have gained plenty of all-round information from nature. By then they should be in a position to express their own feelings and desires. In other words, they may then become real artists—of whom there are not too many.

Figs. 13 and 14 are two demonstrations of a simple method for suggesting the effect of sunlight behind a group of trees. In the first instance a flat tone was painted so as to indicate the silhouette formation of the trees against the sunlit background. Then, as seen in the second example, white paint was painted on the wet prepared ground, chiefly along the marginal edges of the various trees, thus helping to suggest the sunlit portion of the foliage.

This method can be taken to a more advanced stage so as to show the shape of trunks, branches, and so on, but the beginner in landscape art should first learn how to render the simpler aspects as shown in the two demonstrations.

It is obvious that different species of trees have their own bark formation. In Fig. 15 a method is shown of painting the bark of a tree that is characteristic of the Redwood Forest in California. On the left-hand side of this reproduction there are two tree-trunks which show clearly the way in which I began to paint them. One can paint the trunk of a tree with an all-over flat tone, and then build up on top of the flat tone with thick oil colour to get the textured surface of bark. I find it much easier to suggest the bark with a line colour, as shown in the demonstration, before painting solidly over the surface. The two trees on the right-hand side of Fig. 15 indicate the possibility of utilizing the preparatory ground of the bark formation by blending a coat of paint over this surface. My students, who were with me when painting in the Redwood Forest and were also painting the same subject, found my method very useful in their own studies. This technique in oil painting saves a considerable amount of time—an important item when the light in a woodland scene changes so quickly.

In the previous chapter I gave many suggestions for the mixing of oil

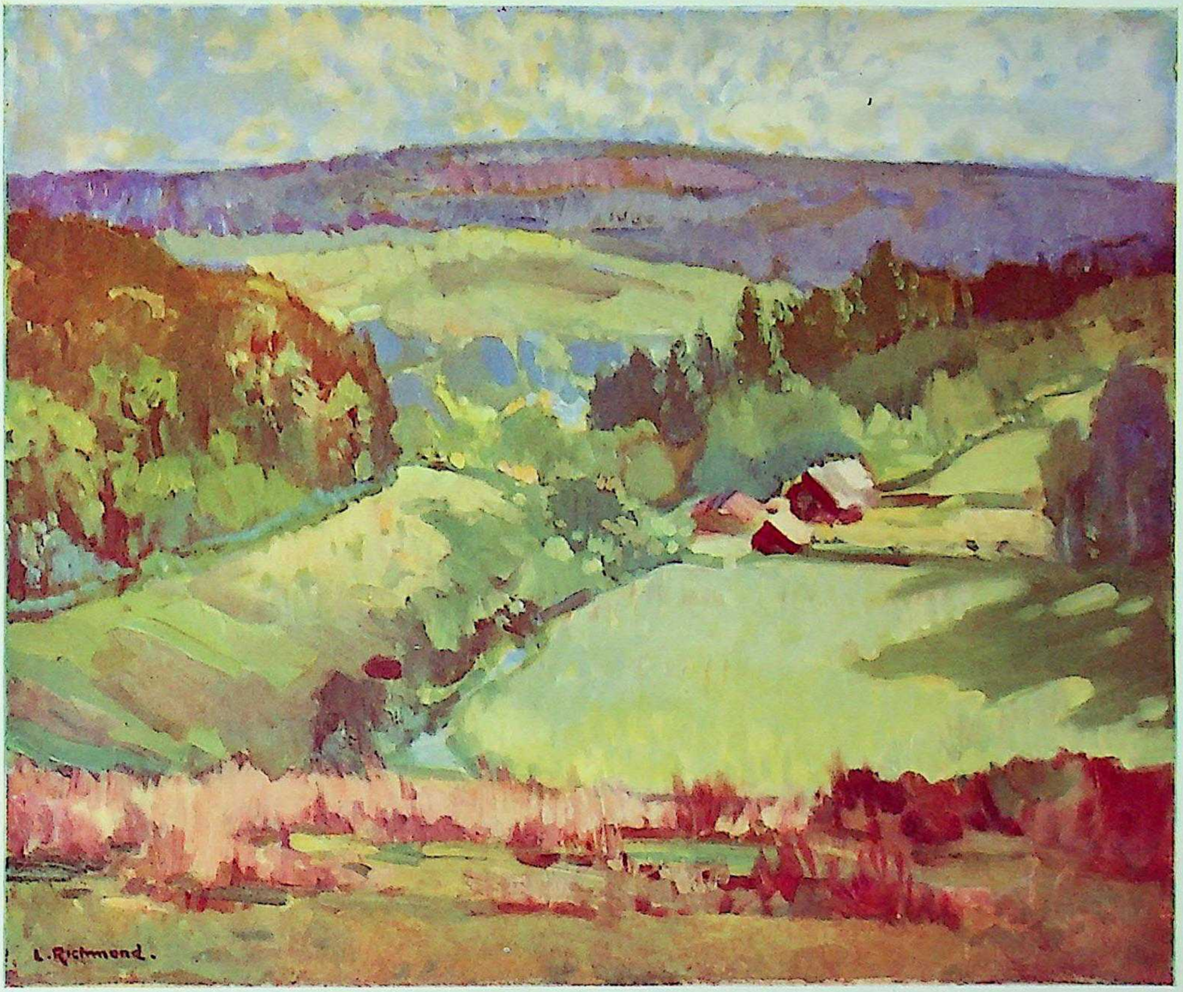

PLATE II
"An English Landscape"
(20 in. × 24 in.)

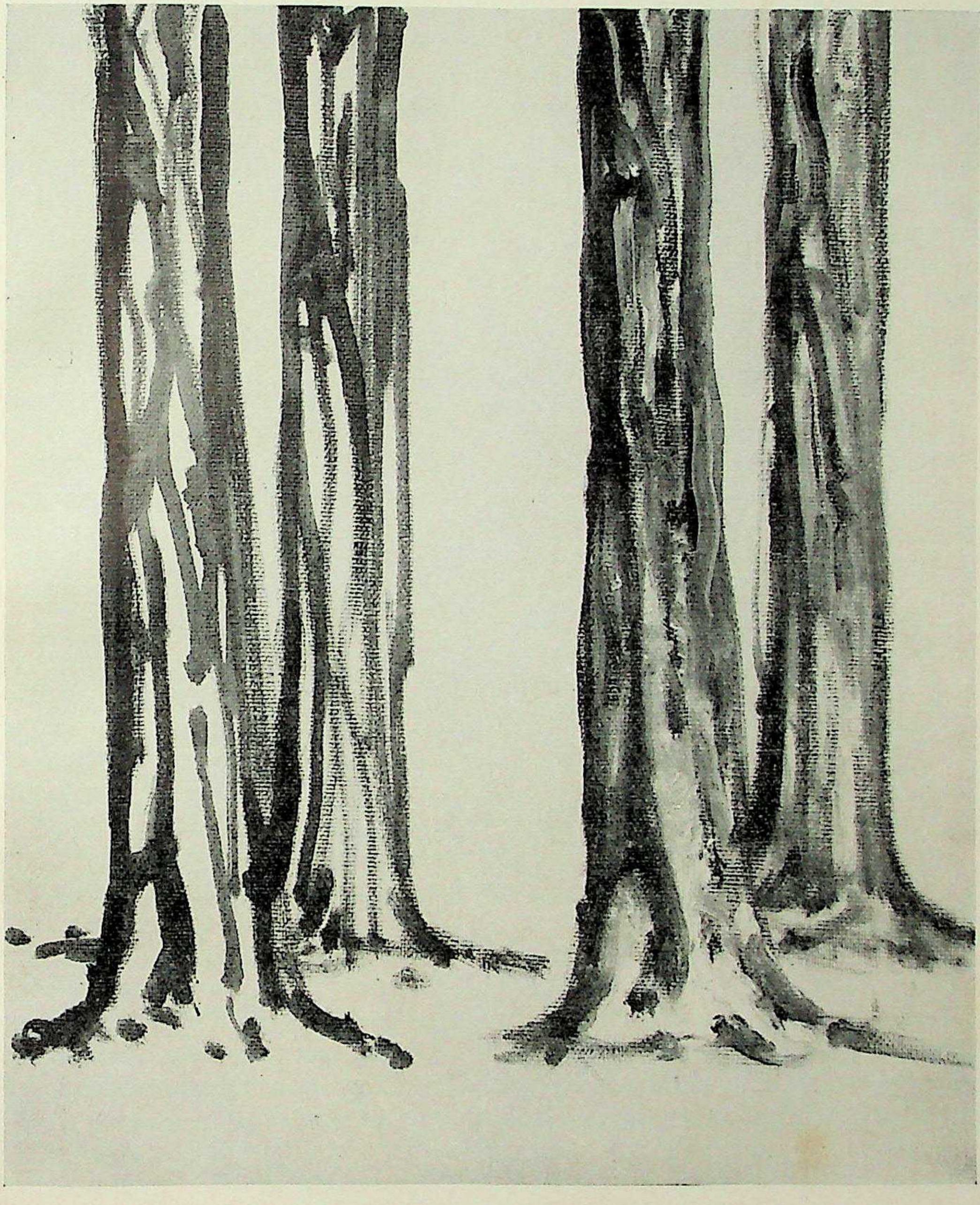

Fig. 15. Method of Suggesting the Bark of Trees

colours so as to get certain tints that one sees so often in nature, so I shall not now dwell for long on this matter. I find that deep ultramarine blue is quite adequate for any of the varied blues that I need for landscape painting. If mixed with flake white (or if you prefer it, titanium white) and some viridian, the blue takes another tint somewhat akin to cobalt blue. I never use Prussian blue, as it is too fugitive for practical purposes. The student should experiment and find out how many different shades of blue he can make, using deep ultramarine as the basic colour. Quite a large number can be evolved by mixing with it, say, a little vermilion or some other colour, but it must always be remembered that blue is the predominant colour, and any other bright tint introduced should be used sparingly so that the blue does not lose its identity.

Ivory black is most excellent when mixed with different colours on your palette; so is lamp-black, but again caution is necessary, as too much black will destroy the required tint.

In an oil painting a pastel or vibrating surface helps to give vitality to the pigment. It can be achieved by painting a thin ground tint of any colour suitable for the purpose, and then, with a "filbert" shaped hog's-hair brush, painting touches of colour over the wet, thin ground. The painting of "An English Landscape" received this style of treatment, but owing to the small size of the coloured reproduction it may not be very noticeable, excepting in the sky and the central portion of the hill immediately below. The overlay of "filbert" brush painting should be decisive and if possible crisp in handling. Also any colour so used must not interfere with the general tone of the picture. The usual practice is to paint the thin, wet ground-tint darker in tone than the colour which is eventually painted over it.

Students of landscape painting in oil colours should—in the early stages of their art instruction—be careful to paint as simply as possible, especially when they try to suggest a vibrant surface. It is a good idea to experiment in the studio with paint on board or canvas before beginning a serious subject out of doors. Try a dark colour well diluted with turpentine, so that it will look more like a water colour than an oil-painted surface. Next, mix this colour with white on the palette and then use the lighter colour with the brush well loaded with pigment, so that each stroke or touch of the brush on the prepared ground tint will stand out clearly from its surroundings.

It is most important to flex the brush firmly when painting in this kind of technique; and by lifting it quickly from the surface after each application of colour, a staccato-like effect is gained, which enhances the vibrancy or sparkle of the oil pigment. A good deal of practice is necessary if the student wishes to achieve a professional standard of painting.

Later, other experiments with vibrant colour can be carried out on a much wider basis. Instead of one colour for the liquid ground wash, try two, which should be more or less evenly spaced over the whole surface. For the first experiment use only light colour for painting over the ground tint of two colours. After considerable practice, try two different light colours on a prepared wet ground of two tints. By that time the keen student will probably be ready for further ideas in the painting of vibrating colour, but it should not be forgotten that the unity of tone so essential in landscape painting must not be lost.

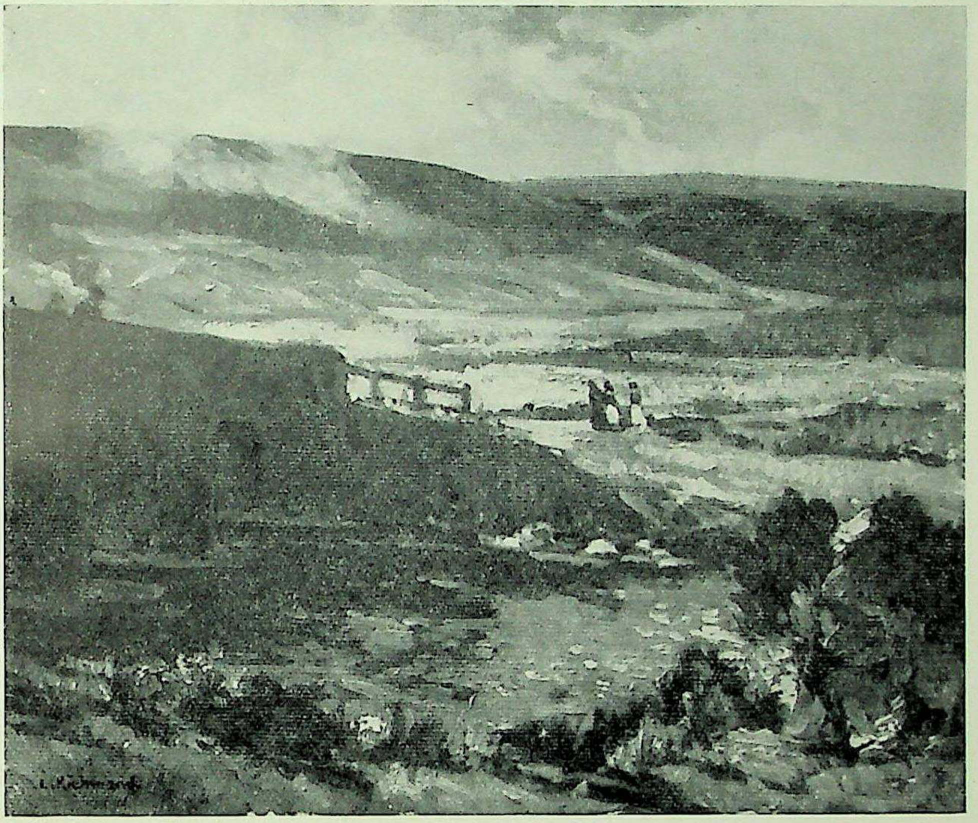

Fig. 16. "Landacre Bridge, Exmoor"
(20 in. × 24 in.)

It is much better to paint with simplicity than to wreck a good subject by an over-dose of conflicting colours that may not be in friendly relationship with one another, causing a distorted colour scheme and losing the main theme of the picture.

The reproduction of "Landacre Bridge, Exmoor" (Fig. 16) loses a great deal of colour interest, since a black and white reproduction can show only the general design and arrangement of light and shadow. The top line of the bridge sloping downward on the left side was originally too obvious. To break the monotony of line I put in two figures. I also painted three figures to the right of the bridge, thus giving a human interest to the picture.

The deep tone of the bridge, with a corresponding deep tone in the water immediately below, gives a certain richness to the composition. The immediate foreground is bathed in sunlight. This, with the sparkle on the water, leads the eye to the sunny middle distance. The distant moors, being dark in tone, help to frame the sunlight effect in the middle distance. Finally, the clouds breaking over the moors on the left add interest to the more romantic aspect of the subject.

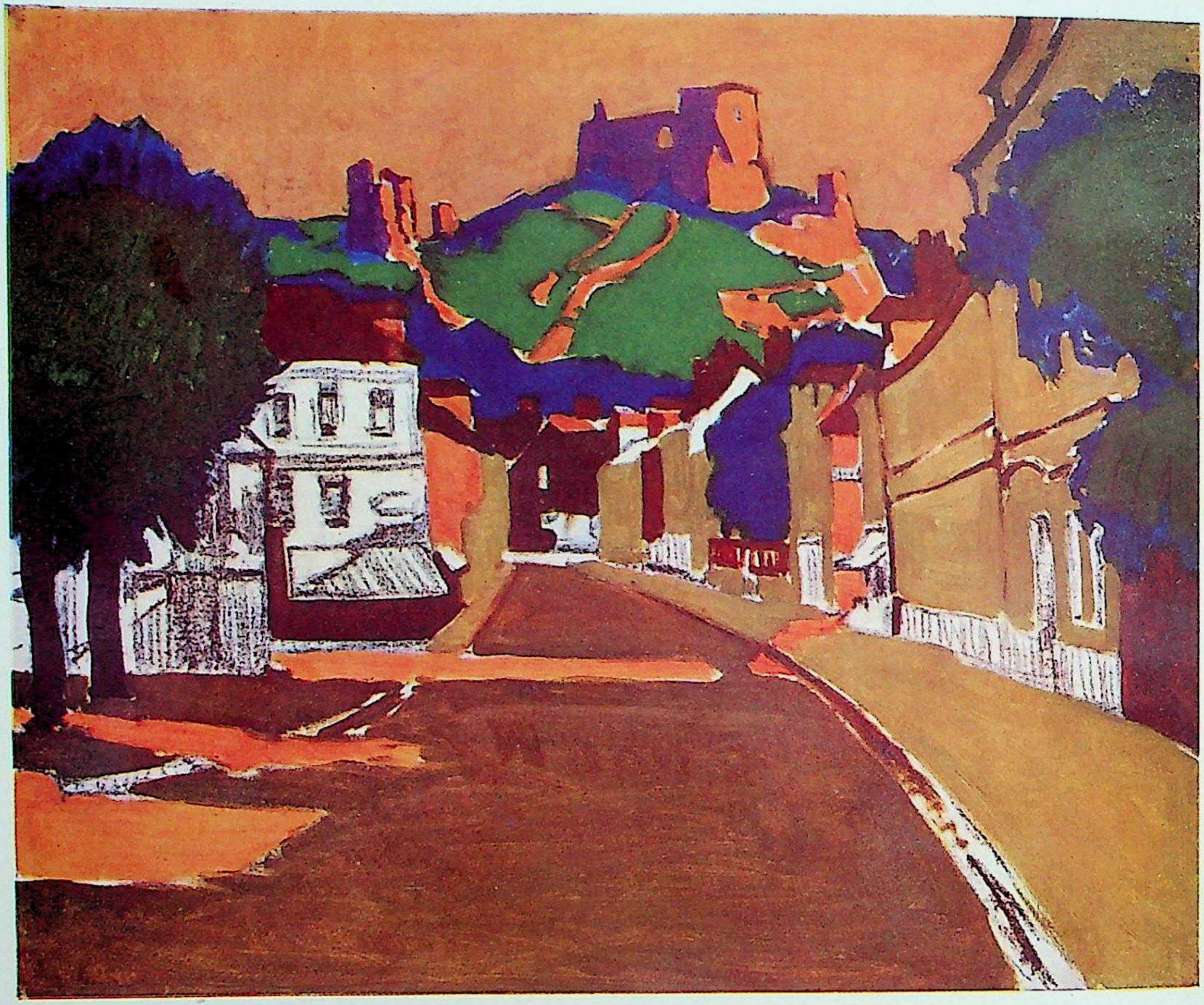

PLATE III
"Château Gaillard, Les Andelys, France"—First Stage

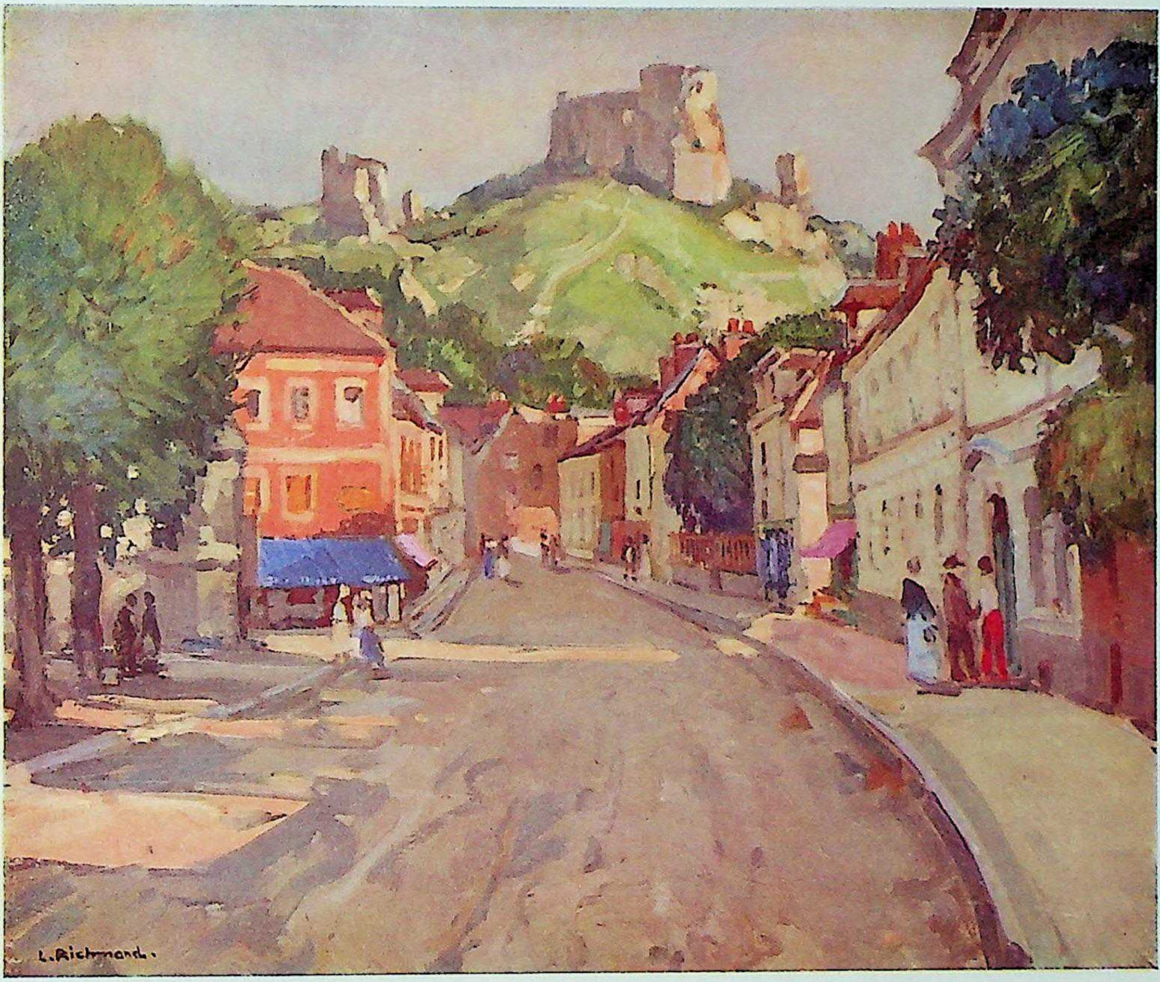

PLATE IV
"Château Gaillard, Les Andelys, France"—Finished Picture
(24 in. × 20 in.)
(Exhibited Royal Academy)

Chapter IV

PLANNING A PICTURE

THE WORD "COMPOSITION" means a great deal, particularly to the landscape artist. What does it actually mean to both the average person and the serious student of painting? My own interpretation suggests that it is primarily an orderly arrangement of various visual objects that should be co-ordinated so as to express one thought, or one idea.

For instance, a landscape might have for its main feature a bridge of special artistic formation situated in the foreground. Now if the bridge is to be of primary interest in the picture, all other objects shown must be arranged so that they can assist in giving the bridge a priority, not only in its position in the landscape, but also in its tone and colour.

It seems to me that composition to the individual student of art should, and generally does, conjure up visions of personal expression in drawing and painting. One realizes this very clearly when examining works such as the paintings of John Sell Cotman, in which he was able to use, in a most masterly way, important elements from nature so as to express his own vision or thought through his own paintings. There are numerous paintings of such artists as Claude Lorraine, John Constable, Turner, and others, in which one comprehends that the artist has had something definite to state. Though all the laws of composition are based on logic, this does not prevent painters from expressing their own feelings or personalities in their creative work. Turner, who was a master of composition, was able—through his genius—to explore a wide field in the decoration and pattern of his paintings, particularly those on a large scale.

It is extremely important for students of art to study as many examples as possible of good compositional pictures. The more knowledge one acquires of the achievements of other painters, paradoxically enough, the more original one is able to become. The appreciation of only one or two masters, with disregard of the works of other great painters, is bound to lead to a dead end, so go all out for study of ancient, medieval, and contemporary art. A wide background of knowledge is a vital factor if you wish to create and express your personal vision.

The colour reproduction, "Château Gaillard, Les Andelys, France"

(Plate III), shows a somewhat complicated study, but on looking carefully at this picture one can see that the main portion of the Château is towards the right-hand side of the picture, which is a more desirable place for it than the centre. Notice that the smaller remains of the castle on the right-hand side of the larger edifice are arranged in pleasant proportional relationship to the surroundings. Again, the ruined section on the extreme left immediately above the pink-tinted building is so arranged that it appears well spaced when compared with the other two architectural features just mentioned.

Now it is important to realize that nature gave to the artist the excellent arrangement seen in this picture. It was drawn and painted precisely as presented by the original subject, but a great deal of time was spent before this happy composition was discovered. There were many views of the same subject which were quite undesirable from a compositional aspect and would have had little or no meaning however faithfully portrayed by an artist. It is essential for students to acquire a feeling for composition so that when they go out painting they will recognize what they are looking for.

On looking at the Château resting on the hill, one can easily see that the general curvature of the hill is convex. But if we drew an imaginary curve starting at the highest point of the top right-hand building, passing downwards along the tops of the roofs or chimneys of the buildings towards the centre, and then running upwards on the left-hand side, we would then get a concave curve. This is interesting theoretically, since the two curves, though in opposition, do not disturb the serenity of the subject. Notice that the line of the road which leads towards the centre of the picture directs the eye to the subject of interest—namely, the Château and its immediate surroundings.

To avoid pictorial confusion with the green material immediately below the Château, I deliberately left out an ivory-coloured quarry which I observed at the foot, or centre, of the Château. Moreover, had I painted this there would have been too much opposition to the rock or quarry structure already shown in the picture. The elimination of unnecessary detail is most important if one wishes to make a convincing composition.

I gave a good deal of attention to the preparatory stages of this picture, in order to provide the student with a clear conception of a sound method for painting this or similar subjects.

In the first stage in oil painting it is advisable to use dark colours only, so that lighter tints can later be painted over the preparatory dark ground. It is more difficult to get a satisfactory result if one paints dark tints over a light-coloured ground.

As this subject was somewhat complex to draw as well as in its composition, I found it advisable to make a careful preliminary drawing in charcoal before adding any colours. The charcoal was used lavishly, and even for shading in places. Finally, it was necessary to spray it with fixative so as not to lose the structural drawing when painting in oils.

Referring to Plate IV, there are a considerable number of light silvery or grey tints in all parts of the picture. These tints became effective when painted over the warm-tinted colours, seen in Plate III.

The preparatory warm colours were painted with a good deal of turpentine, so that they could be used thinly on the canvas, thus enabling the lighter and thicker colours to be painted into a wet surface. If the first coat of warm colour is painted with solid pigment, it should be allowed to dry before a second coat of colour is added.

The student could try the effect of painting a silvery grey, made with a mixture of flake white, a little ivory black, and some yellow ochre, direct on to a pure white canvas or board. If he then paints the same colour mixture on to a prepared yellow ochre ground, so copiously diluted with turpentine that it resembles a transparent water-colour wash, he will become vividly aware of the difference. The first example, painted on a white ground, lacks the convincing quality which is noticeable in the second example. It was for this reason that Plate III was chiefly painted with preparatory warm tints.

Try another colour scheme. Mix ultramarine blue with white and paint this tint on a white canvas; then paint the same blue and white mixture over a prepared, thinly painted, yellow ochre ground. Both examples will show blue colour, but the one painted direct on the white ground will look chalky and unconvincing. The other, although still retaining its blue tint, gains in richness by the partial absorption of wet yellow ochre.

The following colours were mixed for the first stage (Plate III).

1. *The Sky:* yellow ochre, ivory black, flake white with a little vermilion.
2. *Château Wall Shadow:* permanent blue, alizarin crimson, yellow ochre and flake white.
3. *Sunlight on Château Walls:* deep chrome and flake white.
4. *Roofs of Buildings, etc.:* burnt sienna with yellow ochre.
5. *Sky Silhouette of Château Ground and Trees:* permanent blue, flake white, a little alizarin crimson.

(The nearer trees were partly covered with viridian and light chrome.)

6. *Bright Green below Château:* viridian, yellow ochre, and pale chrome.
7. *Buildings and Pavement:* flake white, yellow ochre, and a little ivory black.
8. *Road:* burnt sienna, flake white, and a little viridian.
9. *Two sloping Roof Lines at the top right-hand side:* ivory black, yellow ochre, and flake white.

There are 27 different tints in the nine colour demonstrations shown in Plate V. These tints can be seen in the finished picture (Plate IV). Each demonstration is numbered so that reference can be made to the corresponding number, given above, of the colour mixtures used for the first stage (Plate III). The preparatory ground colour in each demonstration is shown round the edges, and are the same colours as those used for painting the first stage (Plate III).

1 2 3

4 5 6

7 8 9

Example No. 1. *Ground Colour No.* 1

Tint No. 1. Permanent blue, yellow ochre and flake white.
Tint No. 2. Yellow ochre and flake white mixed with Tint No. 1.
Tint No. 3. Deep chrome yellow and white mixed with Tint No. 2.

Example No. 2. *Ground Colour No.* 2

Tint No. 1. Ivory black, flake white, yellow ochre and a little vermilion.

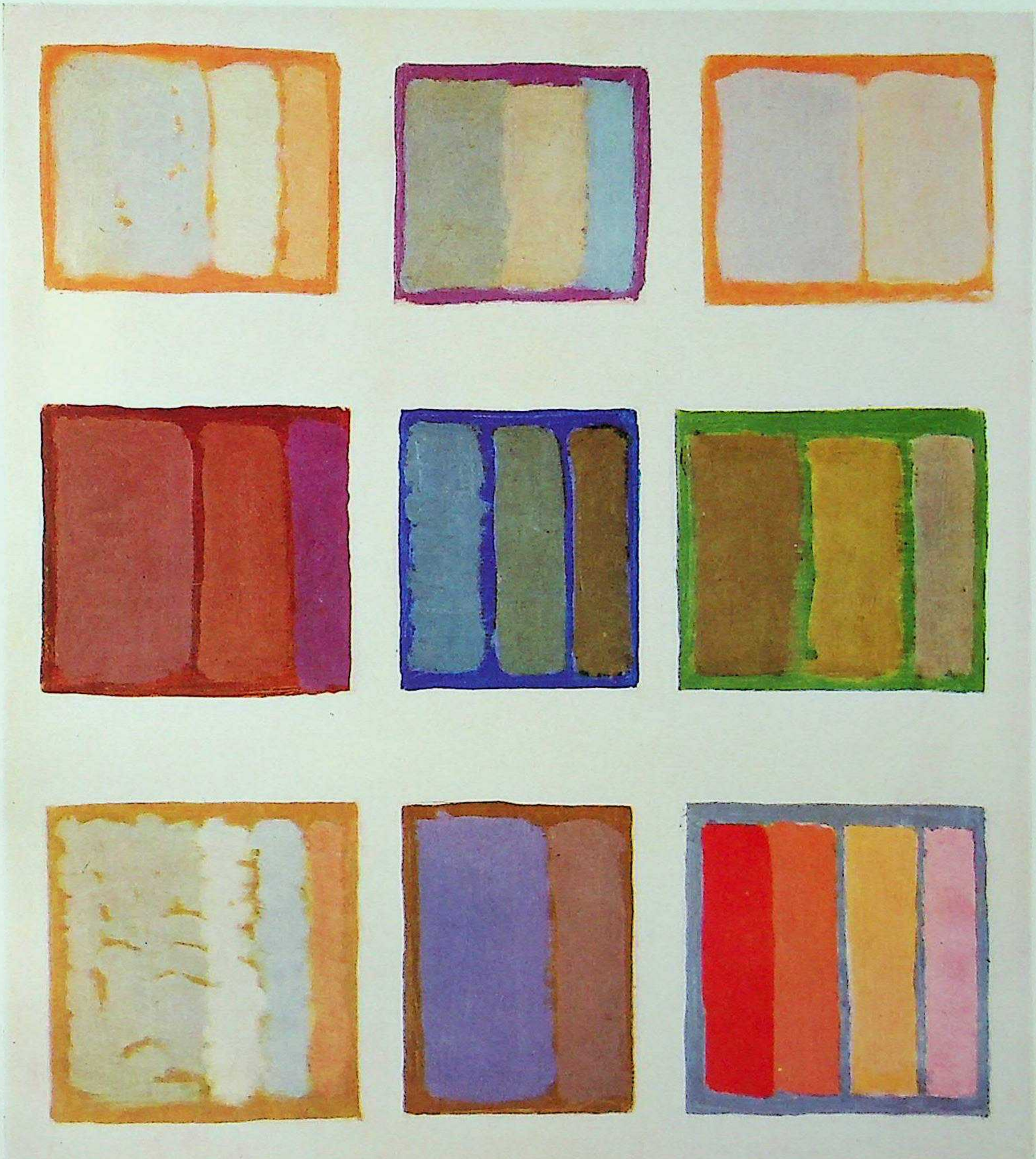

PLATE V

Nine-colour Demonstration Relating to "Château Gaillard, Les Andelys, France" (Plate IV)

Tint No. 2. Flake white, ivory black mixed with Tint No. 1.
Tint No. 3. Permanent blue, alizarin crimson mixed with Tint No.2

Example No. 3. *Ground Colour No.* 3

Tint No. 1. Black, white, and a little deep chrome.

Tint No. 2. The same as above, but well diluted in turpentine to enable the ground colour to show through the superimposed tint.

Example No. 4. *Ground Colour No.* 4

Tint No. 1. White, permanent blue, alizarin crimson, and deep chrome.
Tint No. 2. A little vermilion added to Tint No. 1.

Tint No. 3. White, permanent blue, alizarin crimson, burnt sienna mixed with Tint No. 2.

Example No. 5. *Ground Colour No.* 5

Tint No. 1. Black, white, and vermilion.
Tint No. 2. Yellow ochre added to Tint No. 1.
Tint No. 3. Deep chrome mixed with Tint No. 1.

Example No. 6. *Ground Colour No.* 6

Tint No. 1. Black, white, viridian, yellow ochre, and pale chrome.
Tint No. 2. Pale chrome mixed with Tint No. 1.
Tint No. 3. Pale grey (made with black and white) mixed with Tint No. 2.

Example No. 7. *Ground Colour No.* 7

Tint No. 1. Black, white, and yellow ochre
Tint No. 2. More white added to Tint No. 1.
Tint No. 3. A little permanent blue mixed with Tint No. 1.
Tint No. 4. Deep chrome mixed with Tint No. 1.

Example No. 8. *Ground Colour No.* 8

Tint No. 1. Black, white, permanent blue, with a little yellow ochre and alizarin crimson.

Tint No. 2. Burnt sienna, yellow ochre, and white mixed with Tint No. 1.

Example No. 9. *Ground Colour No.* 9

Tint No. 1. Vermilion.
Tint No. 2. Vermilion mixed with deep chrome.
Tint No. 3. Light chrome and white mixed with Tint No. 2.
Tint No. 4. A little alizarin crimson with flake white.

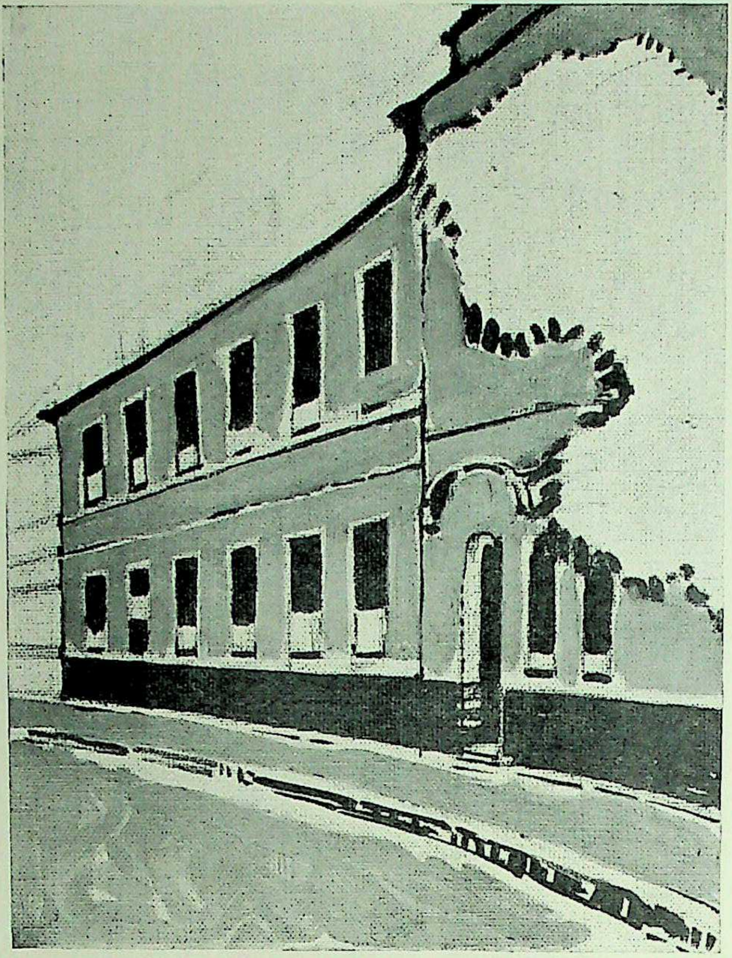

Fig. 17. Painting of Windows—First Stage

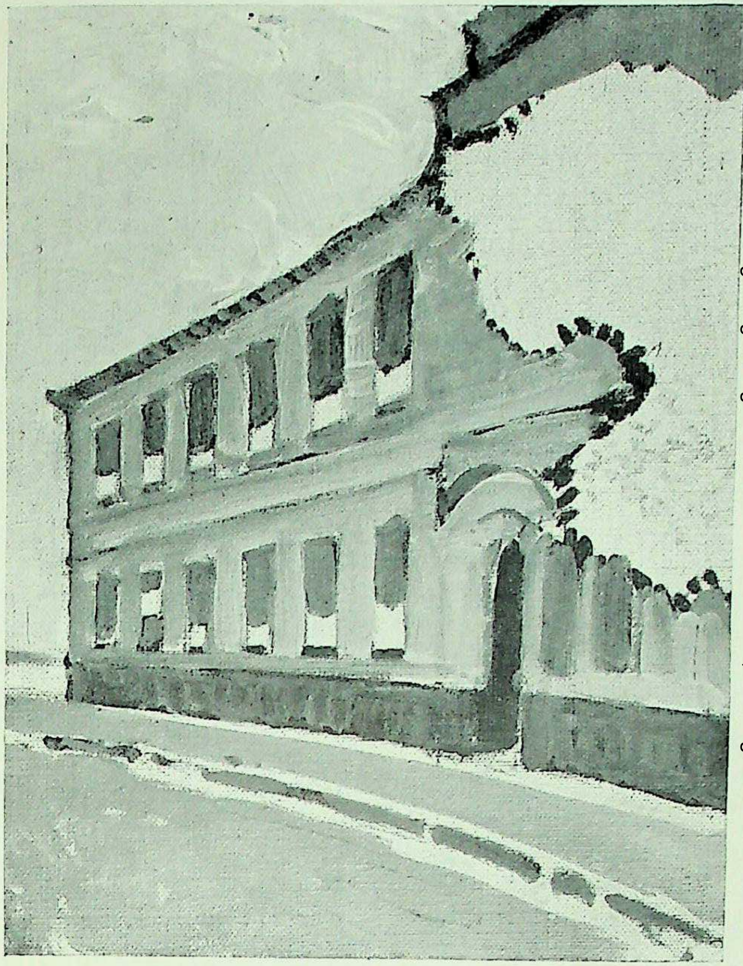

Fig. 18. Painting of Windows—Finished Study

The buildings on the right-hand side of the Château Gaillard subject were selected for two demonstrations so as to help students to paint windows which must be in correct tone value relatively to their buildings. Fig. 17 shows conclusively the error of painting windows too dark in tone on a light wall. This, unfortunately, makes them appear as though they were in front of the wall, instead of being part of the building.

The second example, Fig. 18, shows the serenity of good tone. Here each window was lightened in value; the lines of the roof were also treated in the same way. Students are well advised to practise this type of demonstration so as to make quite sure of their ability to achieve the correct result in any picture.

To return to the finished picture (Plate IV)—a certain amount of thought had to be given to where passages of sunlight flowed across the foreground road and some of the buildings. The design of light versus shadow needed some careful adjustment, apart from the transitory effect of the sun. The horizontal sunlit lines, mostly on the left side, gave stability to the picture, being approximately at right angles to the vertical buildings. Also it should be noticed that horizontal lines help to give an atmosphere of repose to the mind.

The actual painting of the road was extremely difficult. The varied colour as seen in nature was achieved only after several attempts (by scraping off colour with a palette knife and repainting).

Lastly, the figures were put in so as to help the sense of scale and to add a human interest to the subject.

Two black and white reproductions are given here of pictures of Withypool in Somerset. The first (Fig. 19) was painted entirely out of doors, and is easily identifiable because the pattern is of a negative quality, while the foreground trees are only just noticeable against the distant material. I started off in the early morning, and later I discovered a heavenly subject that would have excited any artist, but unfortunately the effect lasted for only about three minutes. It was a delightful morning in November, with frost and fog and the sun bursting through, causing everything in the distance to look like a fine display of shimmering, glittering diamonds. A slight breeze came along and the air palpitated, turning the moving fog into exquisite fantasies, but before I was able to cover any of the canvas the effect had completely disappeared. There was only one thing to do about it, and that was to try to remember my first vital impression.

On returning to my London studio, I made two or three colour studies on smaller canvases from the outdoor sketch (which was 24 in. × 20 in.) and then I began to paint the picture on a 30 in. × 25 in. canvas. The result of my experiments can be seen in the Fig. 20. It should be noticed in this reproduction of the finished painting that the immediate foreground was kept low in tone so that one can study and see the effect of the more delicate

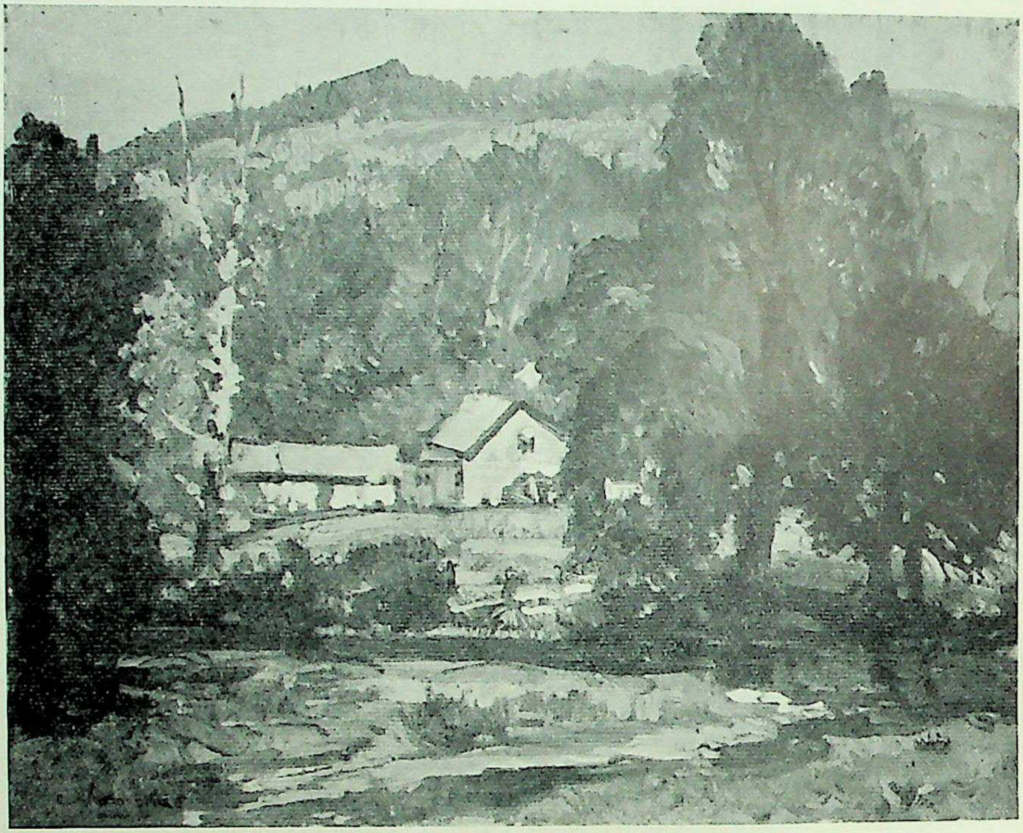

Fig. 19. Outdoor Sketch for "Withypool, Somerset"
(24 in. × 20 in.)

distance. The meadow immediately behind the stream, adjoining the two buildings, is much lighter in tone and far more pleasing in colour than in the original outdoor sketch. The two buildings also fit better into the tonality of the background trees. The pattern of the dark trees adjoining the stream on the right-hand side helps to give emphasis to the artist's feelings in relation to the composition of the foreground and distance. The white railing in the centre of the picture, adjoining the stream or river, shows a more dramatic touch than the insufficiently expressed material in the original sketch. As regards the painting of the sky, there is a vibrating effect generally in the finished picture, and the light cloud suggestion conveys an atmosphere peculiar to that time of the day. If not entirely successful, the general composition of the final painting shows enough development from the original sketch to give students a clue as to the evolutionary possibilities in their own studies.

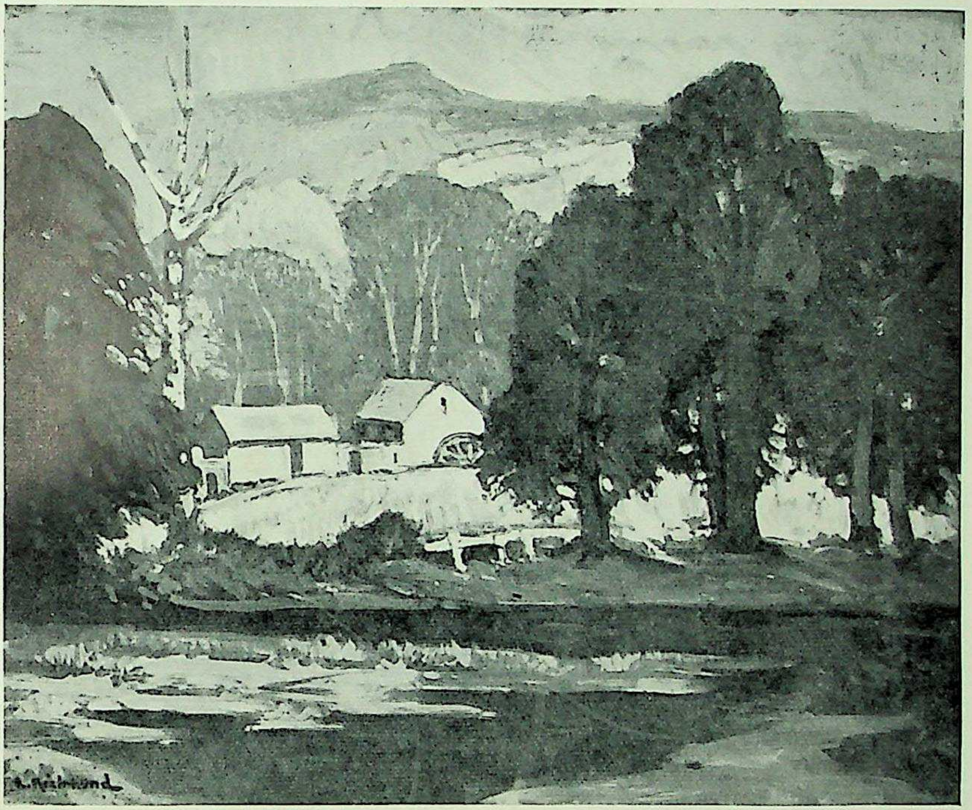

Fig. 20. Studio Picture Based on Outdoor Sketch of "Withypool, Somerset" (30 in. × 25 in.)

Students who may feel disheartened or discouraged with some of their outdoor paintings would be well advised to try out several ideas on any subject which may have failed to give them satisfaction. Quite unconsciously perhaps, the student will discover, in experimenting with his work, that he is expressing something that is part of his own feeling with regard to landscape art. In any event, it is most interesting to a student or to a professional artist to try to create something new from his own previous work. Personally, I have now reached a stage in landscape painting where I first paint out of doors the original subject as presented by nature; then in my studio I paint the subject again the same size, working solely from the original sketch. Thirdly, I usually get a larger canvas and, with the original painting and the second interpretation before me, I put in all I know on the final canvas. It is only by absorbing this method that I feel I can reveal my own emotional reaction to the subject.

Chapter V

COLOUR AND HARMONY; BALANCED COMPOSITION

THE PICTURE ENTITLED "Cristo Rey Church, Santa Fé, New Mexico" (Plate VI) was painted at an altitude well above 7,000 feet. The pink-coloured church on the left—although only recently built—was designed with the same motif as the more ancient architectural buildings in the district.

The above and other buildings in New Mexico are built from the local, clay-type soil, which is somewhat pink in colour. It is easy to handle and most useful, as when the necessity arises the local people have only to go back to the soil for more pinkish clay to repair their homes.

One of the charms of this coloured clay is the way in which, through weather conditions, the original tint becomes paler and more sensitive in tone. This can be seen in certain parts of the coloured reproduction. The Cristo Rey Church, on the left, being recently built, is more positive in colour than the other group of buildings towards the right. The colour of the stones seen centrally in the immediate foreground was originally the same tint as the church, but atmospheric conditions have changed their hue to a lighter key. The colour scheme of the buildings, in relation to the similar colour of the soil, helps very considerably in giving the picture a feeling of harmony.

The silvery colour of the grass and cacti plants are invaluable to landscape painters in this district. These delicate tints are more noticeable in the foreground of the picture. In New Mexico, as in some parts of Canada, the air is very clear, with fine blue skies which are often vivid in colour, thus causing the distant mountains to be clear-cut in profile. A good feature for artists is the intense green of some of the trees. They are most refreshing to look at, particularly during the heat waves that occur so frequently in the summer months.

This painting was made entirely out of doors. How thrilling it is to enjoy the fun of painting, breathing plenty of fresh air, as with a feeling of exhilaration one brings all one's powers to the attempt to do something worth-while in art!

The blue sky is a decided contrast to the yellowish-pink buildings and soil depicted in the landscape. It was painted with a mixture of white, ultramarine blue, viridian, and a little pale chrome. The first two colours, with a small portion of alizarin crimson, were mixed with yellow ochre for the dark clouds, and with flake white for the light clouds.

The colour of the distant, dark-toned mountains was made with deep ultramarine, alizarin crimson, burnt sienna, and flake white. For the buildings and soil, mid-chrome yellow, vermilion, a little yellow ochre and alizarin crimson, flake white, and occasionally a touch of ivory black were used.

The mixture for the dark trees consisted of viridian, deep ultramarine blue, flake white and, when necessary, a little burnt sienna. The lighter coloured trees were painted with viridian, yellow ochre, light chrome, burnt sienna, and flake white, with sometimes a little ivory black. The silvery grey trees and foreground material contained a good deal of white pigment mixed with various tints of green and a small portion of ivory black. Without the mixture of black it is impossible to obtain that silvery tint so important in this type of picture.

The Cristo Rey Church and the other buildings stand out clearly, chiefly owing to the effect of sunlight on brightly coloured surfaces. The colours were obtained through the mixture of deep chrome, vermilion, flake white, yellow ochre, a little alizarin crimson, and the sobering influence of ivory black. A similar mixture, with certain modifications, was used for the ground soil.

As with so many subjects in New Mexico, the design of this picture needed minor adjustments only in the general layout. In this instance the large area occupied by the landscape left little room for the sky—a helpful factor, as the eye is then left free to visualize the mountains, trees, buildings, and so on.

The horizontal ground shadows at the foot of the smaller trees which spread across the picture are approximately at right angles to the vertical buildings and taller trees above. This makes the composition more interesting and also lends support to the height of the material above. Horizontal lines suggest serenity or peace; vertical lines are generally more disturbing, and attract attention by their forceful direction. The dark mass of trees in shadow in the central portion of the picture balances the dark tone of the mountains above.

The picture entitled "The River Wey, near Guildford, Surrey" (Fig. 21), was chosen so as to illustrate a stringent or severe pattern, in which nature was adapted to a certain formula for the purpose of expressing simplicity in design. In nature the dark trees on the right-hand side were nothing like as

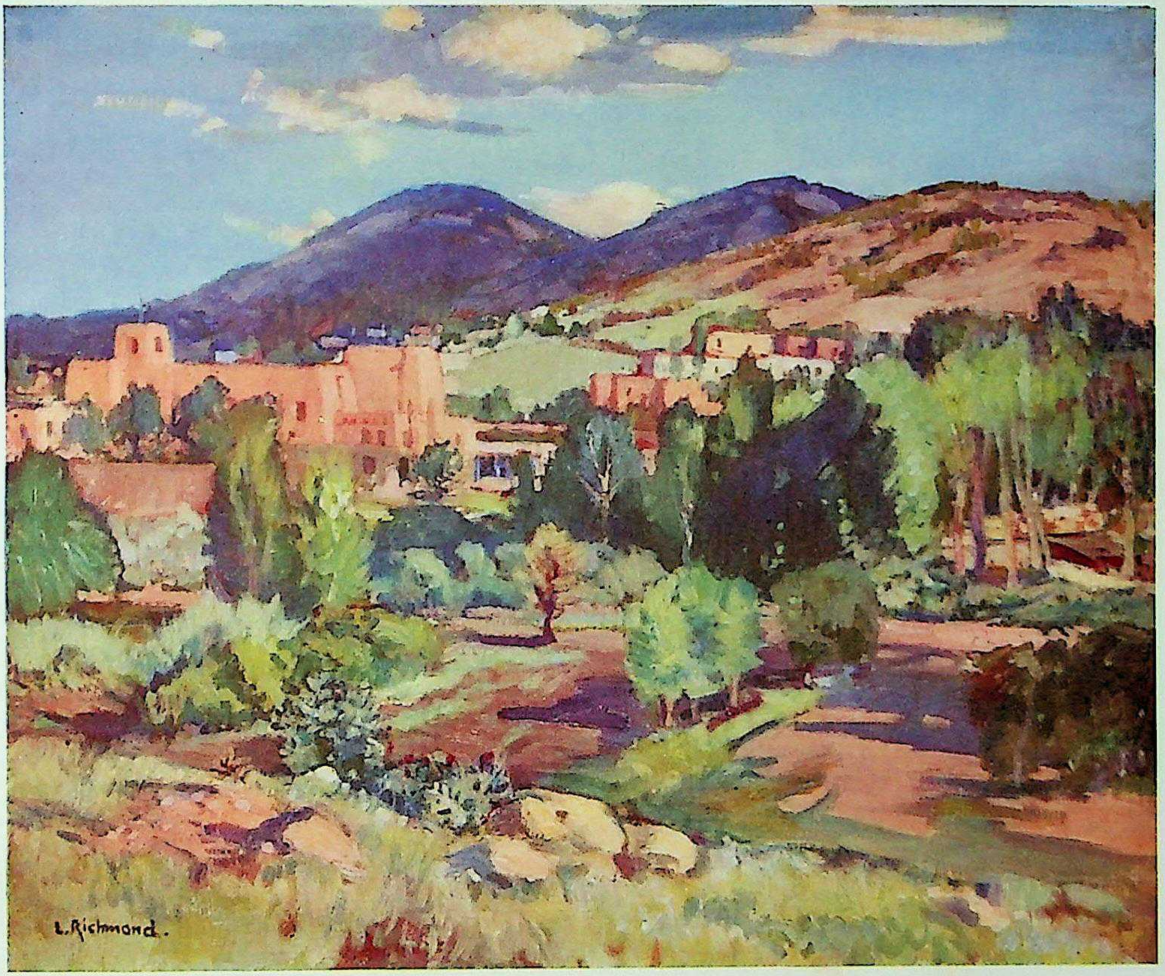

PLATE VI
"Cristo Rey Church, Santa Fé, New Mexico"
(26 in. × 32 in.)

high as those seen in the reproduction. Their height has been exaggerated to gain a feeling of dignity and quietude. Being dark in tone and massive in design, they play a fundamental part in the layout of the subject. The much smaller dark trees on the left-hand side balance the picture. If they were taken away the composition would become one-sided. The bright light reflected on the water gives a focal interest to the painting, and adds, through contrast, to the intensity of the dark trees behind.

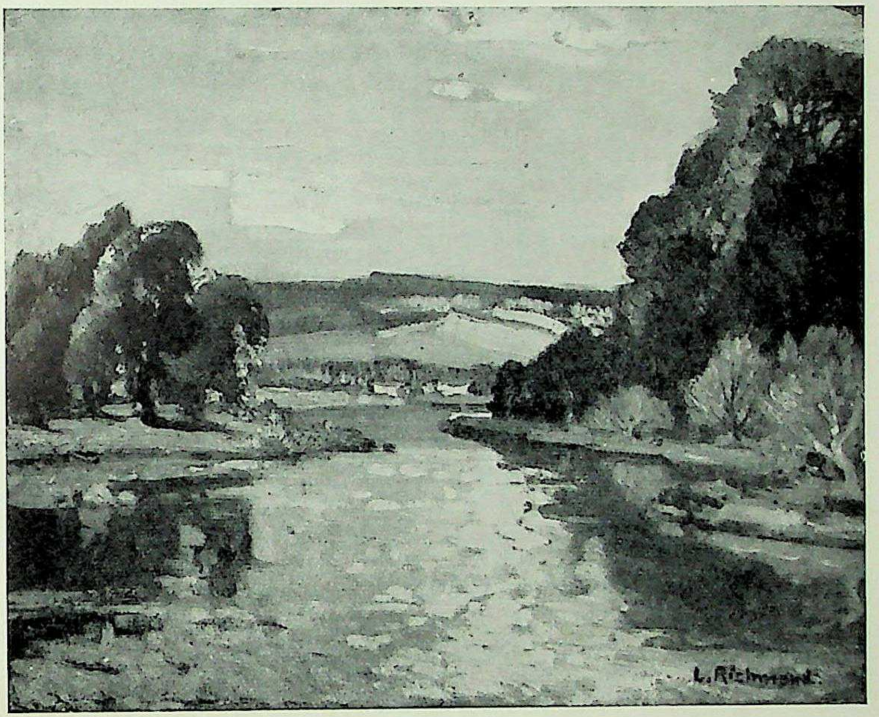

Fig. 21. "The River Wey, near Guildford, Surrey"
(13 in. × 16 in.)

To help students to paint river subjects I have included four demonstrations in gradated stages. The first (Fig. 22) shows two tones only, namely the sky and the water. They were painted flat as a preparatory ground for the second stage.

The second example (Fig. 23) is quite artistic in the suggestive softness of sunlight on the water. This sunlit effect was made by dipping a clean rag in turpentine, and then using it for rubbing off the wet oil surface, thus exposing the white canvas underneath. This treatment also applies to the clouds. It

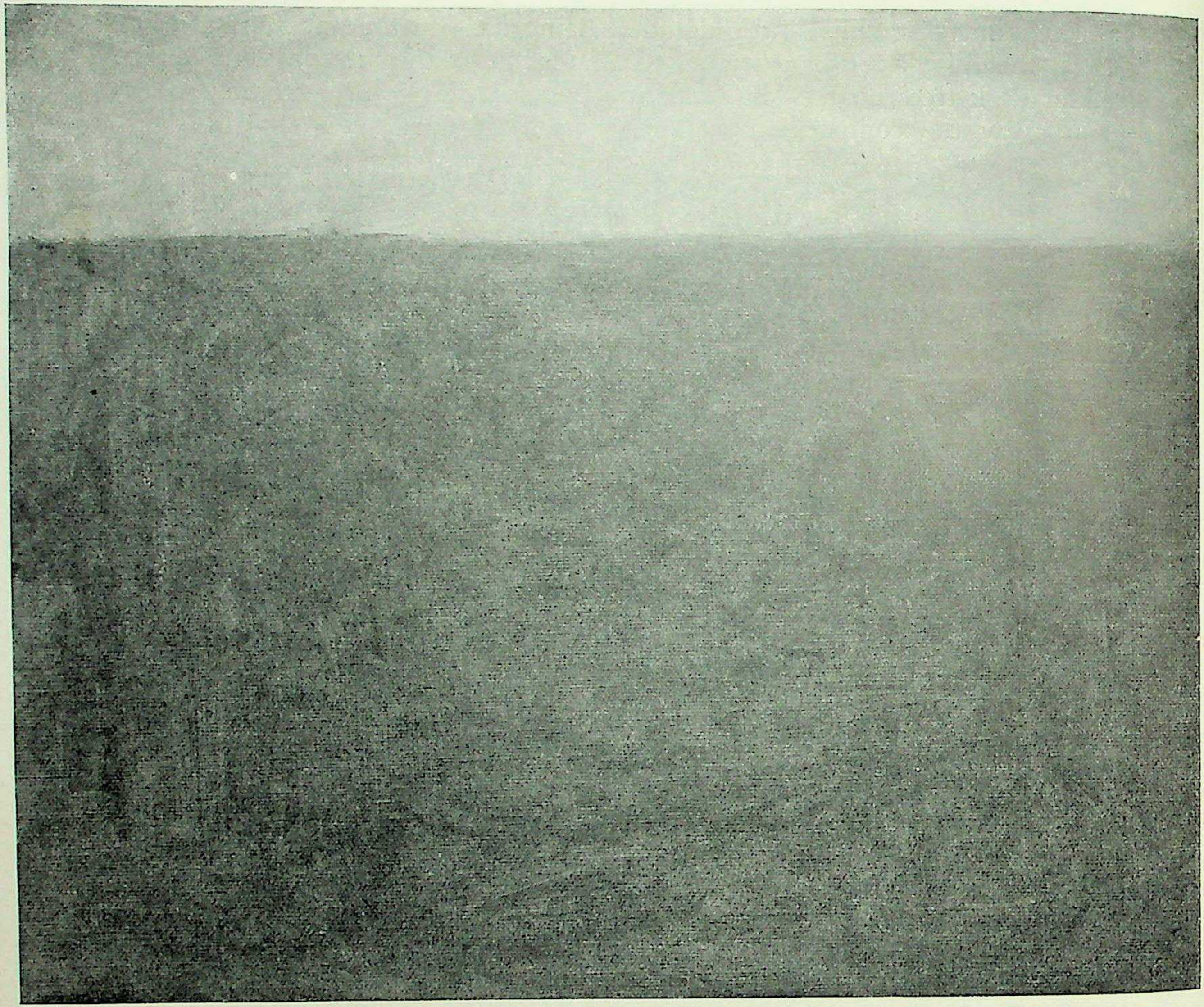

Fig. 22. Study of Water—First Stage

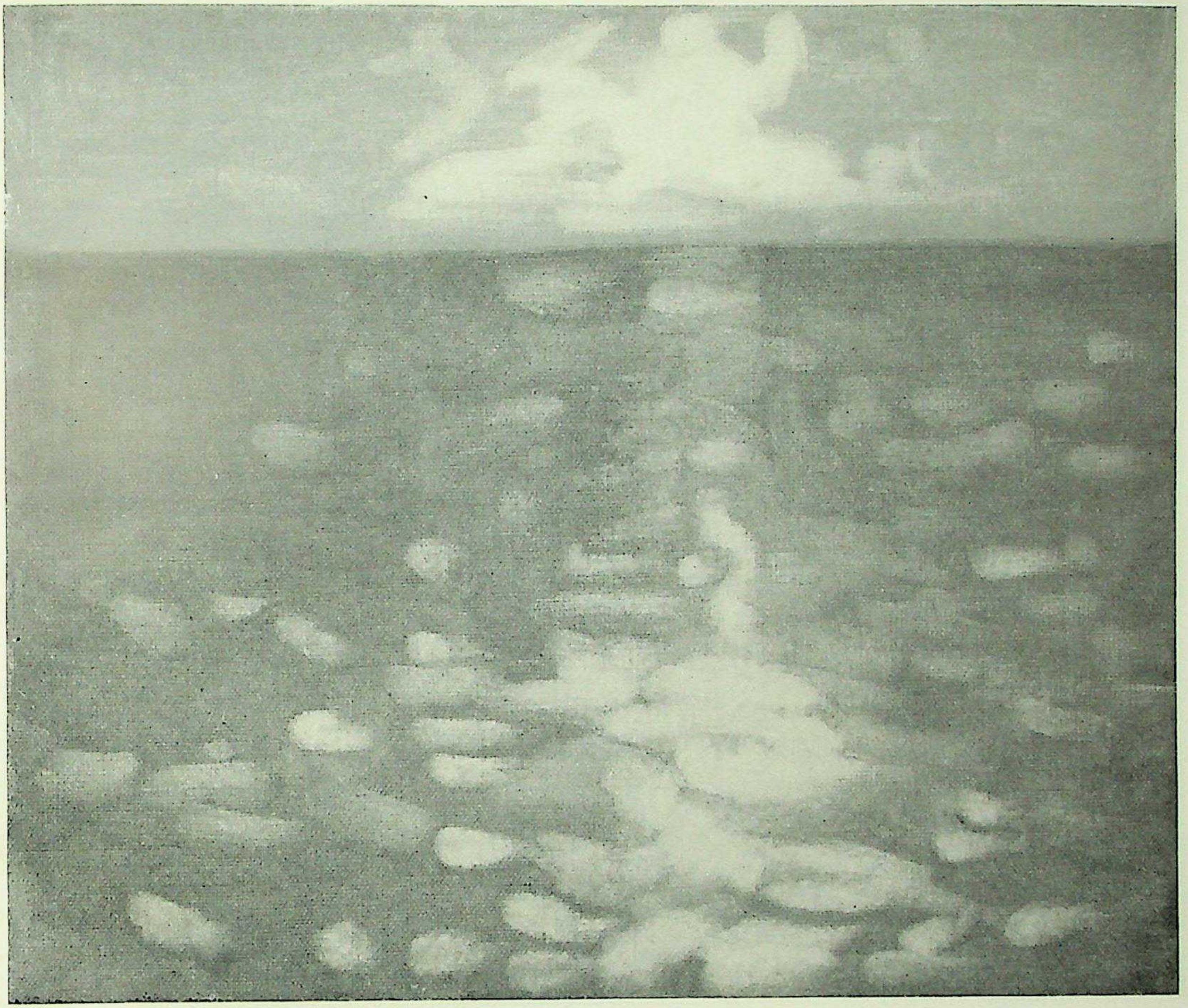

Fig. 23. Study of Water—Second Stage

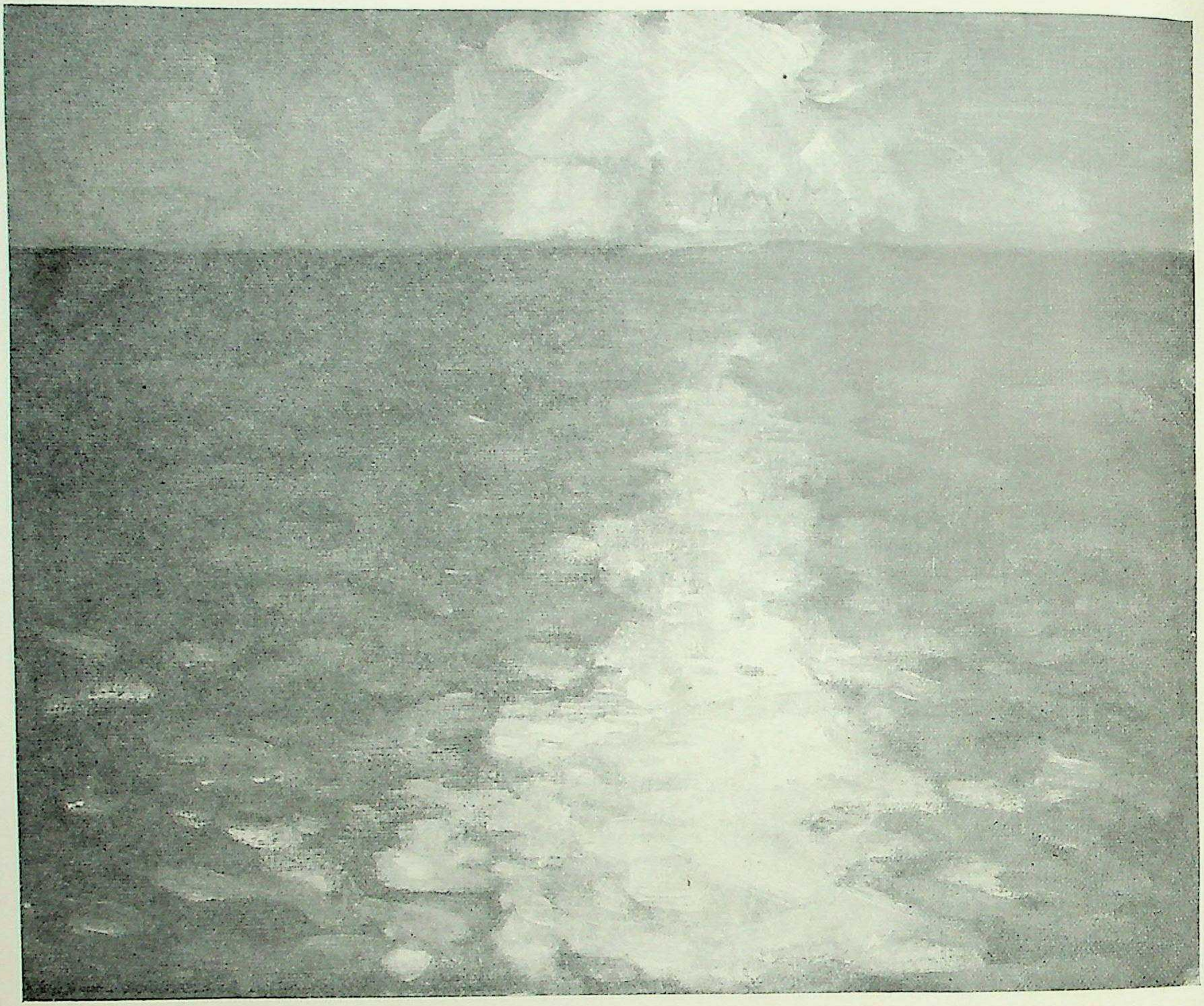

Fig. 24. Study of Water—Finished Study

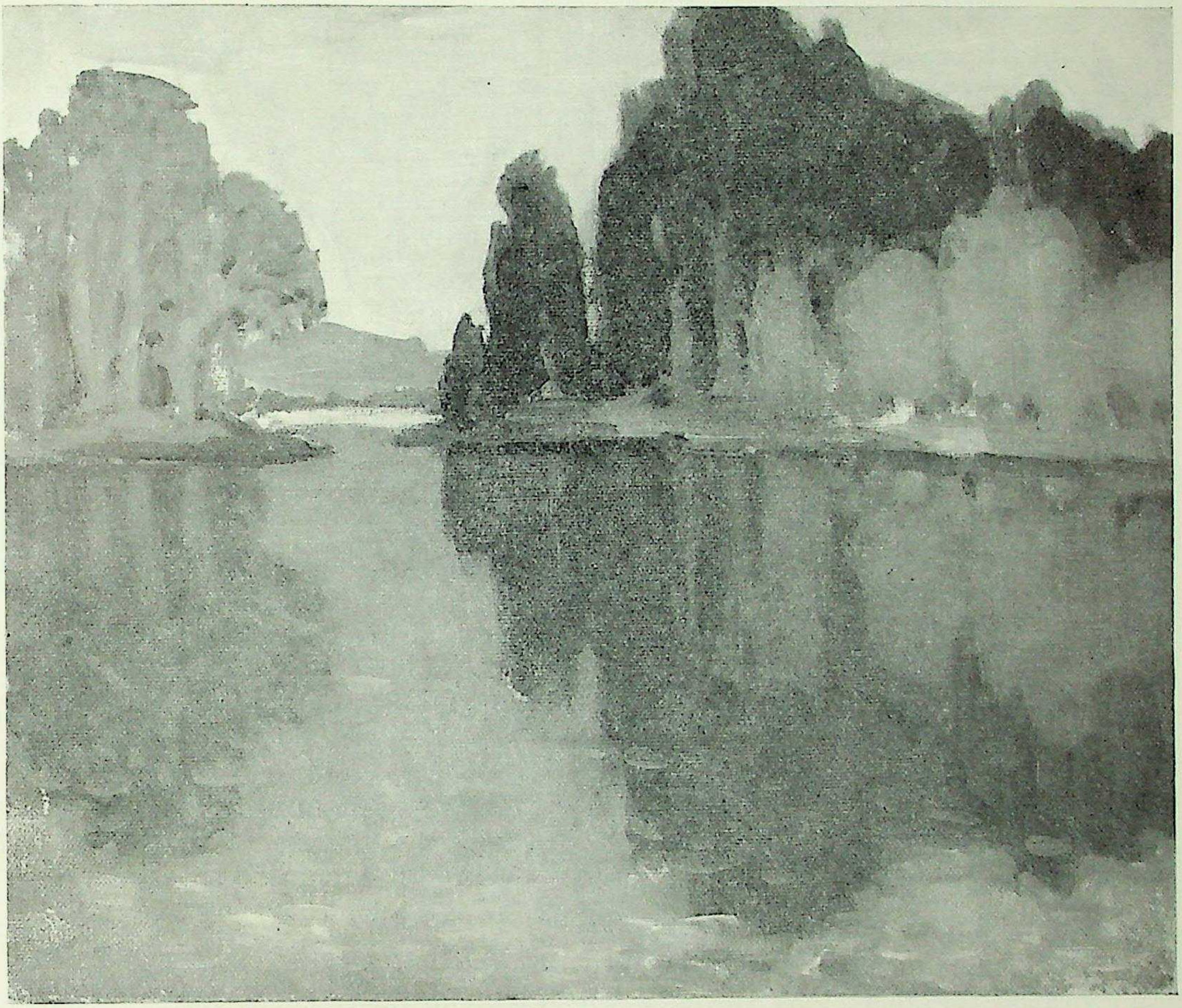

Fig. 25. Study of Water—How to Paint Reflections

is important to keep the turpentine rag quite clean for each application on the canvas.

The light illuminated on the surface of the water shows a certain amount of perspective value. That is to say, as the light approaches the spectator so does its width become greater. There is also more movement on the water in the lower part of the picture, and less movement when receding to the middle and far distance. On a windy day this effect is quite obvious, but even on a calm day the same principle applies.

In the third stage (Fig. 24) pure white paint was used to get the sensation of bright light.

For the purpose of demonstration these three were painted in black and white, but the same method can be utilized for painting in colour.

The fourth example (Fig. 25) is a valuable demonstration for students. In painting reflections on tranquil water there are two things to remember: objects such as dark trees above the water are lighter in tone in their reflections below, whereas light objects such as light trees, buildings, etc., show darker reflections. It is easy to forget this important point. Since dark objects appear lighter and light objects appear darker, one may ask: is it possible for an object to have precisely the same tone value in the water as it has above? The tone of the group of trees on the left-hand side is midway between dark and light. Their reflections in the water are therefore the same tonal value—midway between light and dark. It is therefore possible to have the same tonal value in an object above the water and in its reflection below.

The demonstration also indicates the advisability of making water darker in tone than the sky above. To reverse this would lead to lack of stability in a picture.

"Porthmeor Beach, St. Ives, Cornwall" (Fig. 26), was painted from a fairly high altitude so that the eye level was well above the various objects seen on the shore and elsewhere. The Santa Fé landscape (Plate VI), reproduced in colour, was also painted out of doors from a height considerably above the ground level, and not much sky is visible in either of these examples.

From a compositional standpoint the lines of the bathing-tents (Fig. 26), arranged more or less in single file, lead the eye to the more distant material. Probably the owner of the bathing tents little knew how helpful he was being to artists, when he set them up for the benefit of visitors. The Porthmeor Beach subject was discovered only after a long search for something interesting to paint. Luckily, no alterations were necessary in the general pattern. It is rare to find a subject so artistically intriguing and so suggestive of delicate beauty. The dark-roofed hut on the right-hand side was a most important bit of tone. The black and white reproduction shows this quite clearly. If the hut and adjoining dark material were not in the picture, a good deal of artistic interest would be lost through lack of variety in the contrast of tone value.

This type of picture is not easy for an inexperienced student to paint. A great deal of observation of sensitive colour tones is necessary before the subject is started. So many amateurs fail when painting sand on the shore. My advice is to use a mixture of yellow ochre, flake white, and ivory black—plenty of white and very little black. The latter colour cools the yellow ochre and is a most valuable asset. The main difficulty for students in painting sand on the sea-shore is to find some method of representing the receding planes from the foreground to the distance. There is nothing worse than a flat tone covering a wide area of space. It lacks pictorial interest

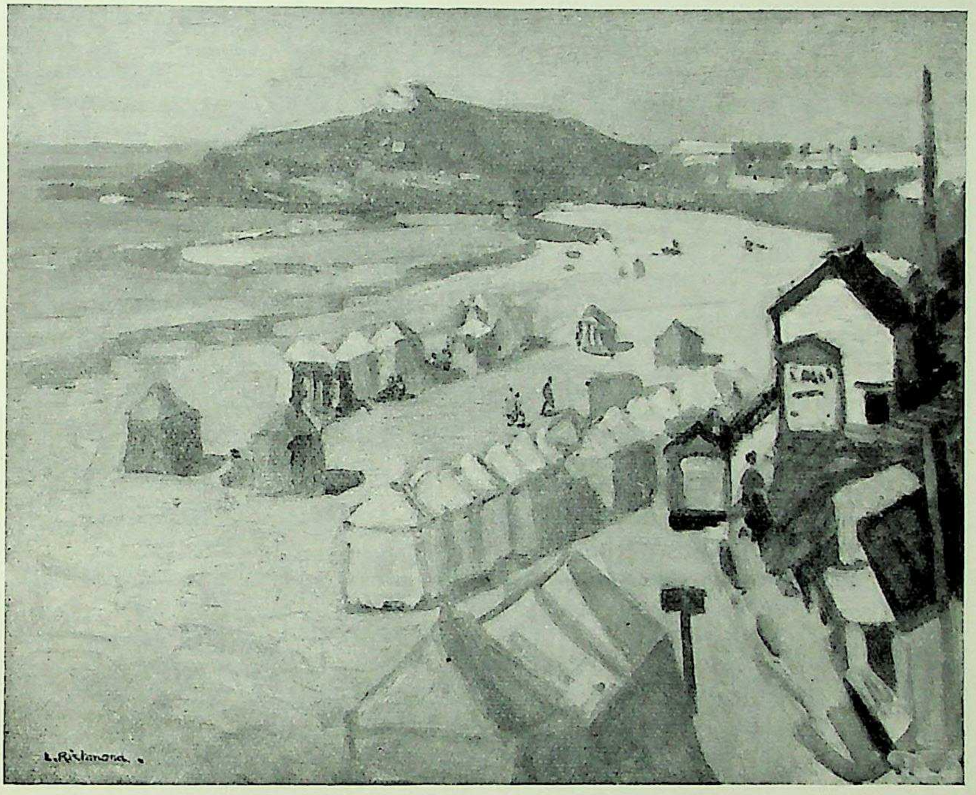

Fig. 26. "Porthmeor Beach, St. Ives, Cornwall"
(16 in. × 20 in.)

and aerial perspective. It is quite safe to paint the foreground sand darker in tone than the middle distance, and so on, using possibly more yellow ochre for the foreground and less yellow and more white as the sand recedes into the distance. Nature in one of her moods can change many a carefully thought-out theory, but in landscape painting there is always the fundamental basis of varying gradated tones to be studied. I have seen distant sand slightly tinged with blue in colour. Certainly it was much cooler in colour than the sand at my feet.

Working from the basis of a mixture of white, yellow ochre, and black, there are occasions when another colour must be added to the above. Here again, keen observation is necessary. It might be that a little vermilion, or blue, or viridian, or some other tint is needed to mix with the basic sand colour. Nature displays her tints for you to copy if you can.

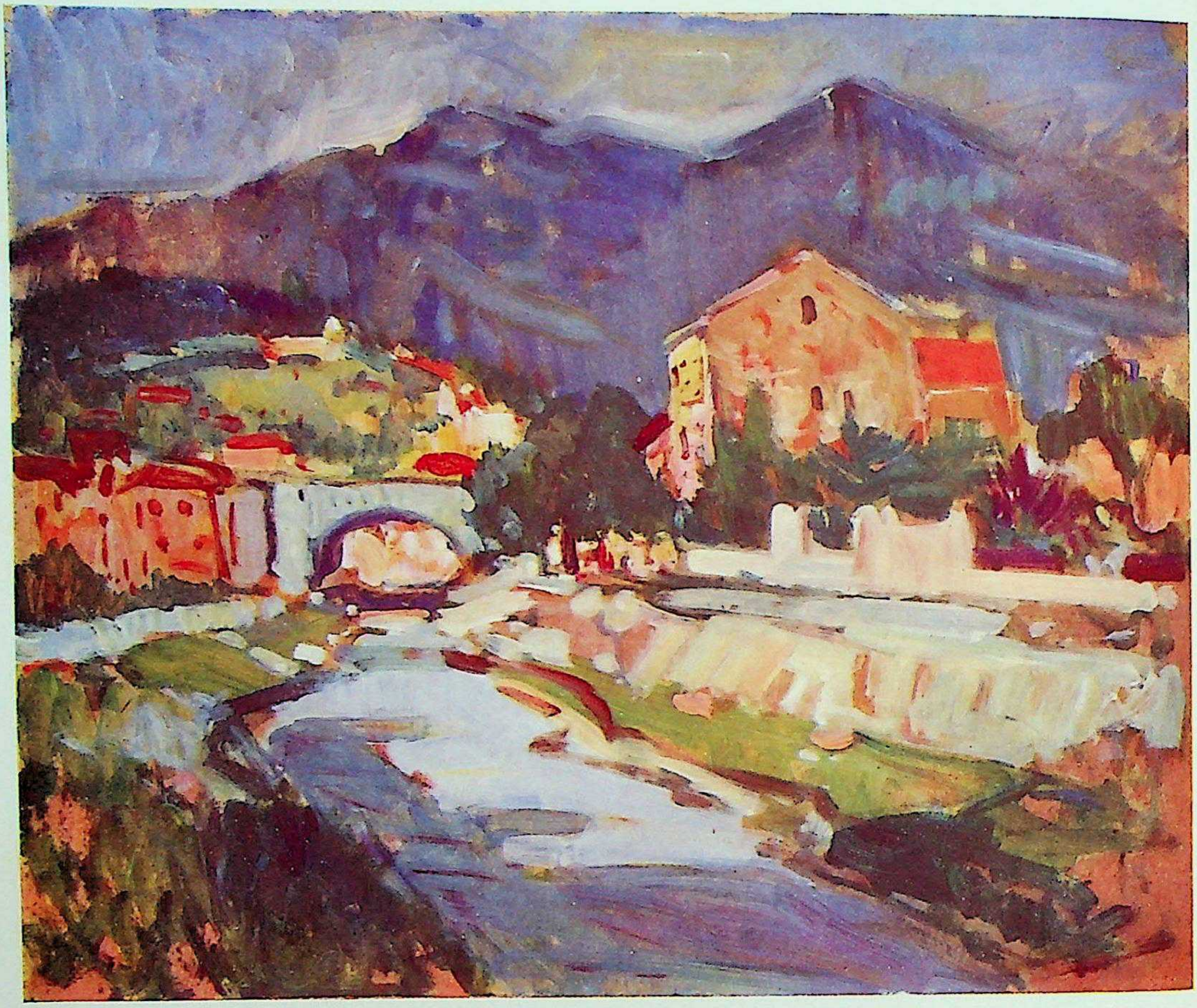

PLATE VII
Sketch for "The River, Menton, France"
(20 in. × 24 in.)

Chapter VI

THE FUNCTION OF THE OUTDOOR SKETCH

"The river, menton, france" is shown in two coloured reproductions. Plate VII represents the sketch of this interesting scene and Plate VIII the finished picture. In the making of a sketch, the main idea is to find the chief factor of interest in the landscape and then to give it prominence in form and colour. There are three important elements in this picture: first, the dramatic background caused by the towering mountains; second, the warm, orange-tinted buildings contrasting against the dark mountains; third, the direction of the river from the foreground leading the eye towards the bridge, as well as towards the group of buildings on each side.

A sketch should be painted rapidly, without undue concern as to whether the drawing is correct. It is invigorating to paint joyous colours, similar to those in this scene; the artist can obtain an emotional response from so doing, provided that he gives himself the pleasure of painting freely. Unless the sketch has a decisive message in colour and pattern, there can be little hope of painting a distinguished picture from it.

There is, of course, more drawing and more skill in the finished picture (Plate VIII). Both were painted on the board known as Masonite. On the extreme right-hand side of the sketch there are several places where no oil paint was used, thus showing the actual colour of the Masonite. The yellowish-brown of this board makes a good foundation colour on which to paint a sketch or picture, and it is most helpful in the assessing of the value of tone and colour during a painting. A white board—or canvas—demands more time, as the white ground must be covered all over with oil colours before serious painting can be commenced.

A good way to paint a serious picture is to make not less than three outdoor sketches in colour, in addition to pencil and charcoal drawings. This background of information gives the artist a chance of expressing his own personality, without losing the essence of nature seen in pictorial form.

The two black and white reproductions of Porlock Weir, Somerset, Figs. 27 and 28, clearly demonstrate the use of an outdoor sketch as an aid to picture planning. The outdoor sketch, Fig. 27, shows the actual proportion and composition of the main items seen in nature, with no attempt to alter the naturalistic pattern. The finished picture, Fig. 28, is spacious in design and much lower in tone than the sketch. Emphasis was given to the two light-coloured boats by eliminating the effect of sunlight on the harbour walls, as well as the lightness of the sky. The tone of the water was lowered so as to reflect the dark sky above.

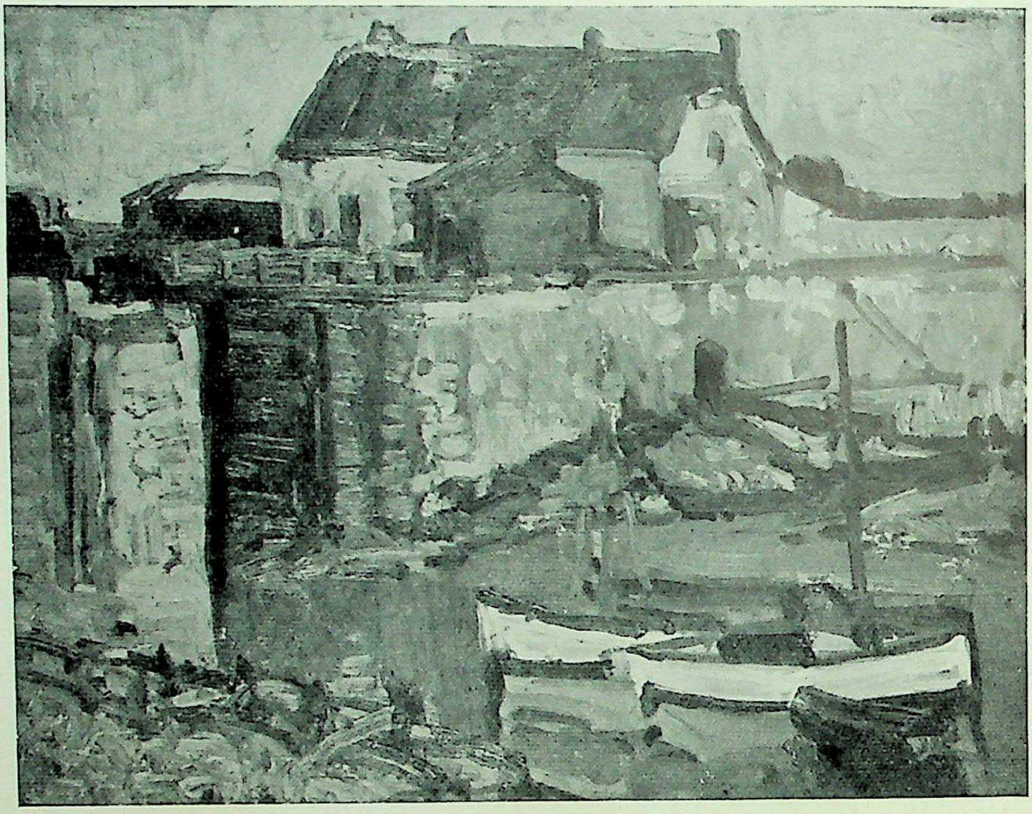

Fig. 27. Sketch for "Boats at Porlock Weir, Somerset"
(16 in. × 20 in.)

Two other oil sketches were also made of the same subject. With three outdoor studies in colour for reference, and some pencil drawings of detail, plenty of information was available to help in the composition and painting of the finished picture.

The "Compositional Study of Boats" at Porlock Weir, Somerset (Fig. 29), reproduced here in monochrome, was one of the few outdoor sketches that needed no alteration, either in pattern, tone, or colour. It was painted with freshness of vision, in less than two hours. The advantage of not showing any sky in this subject is considerable, as the eye is thus able to concentrate solely on the boats. The dark background of buildings was instrumental in showing—through contrast—the light-coloured boats grouped alongside the wharf.

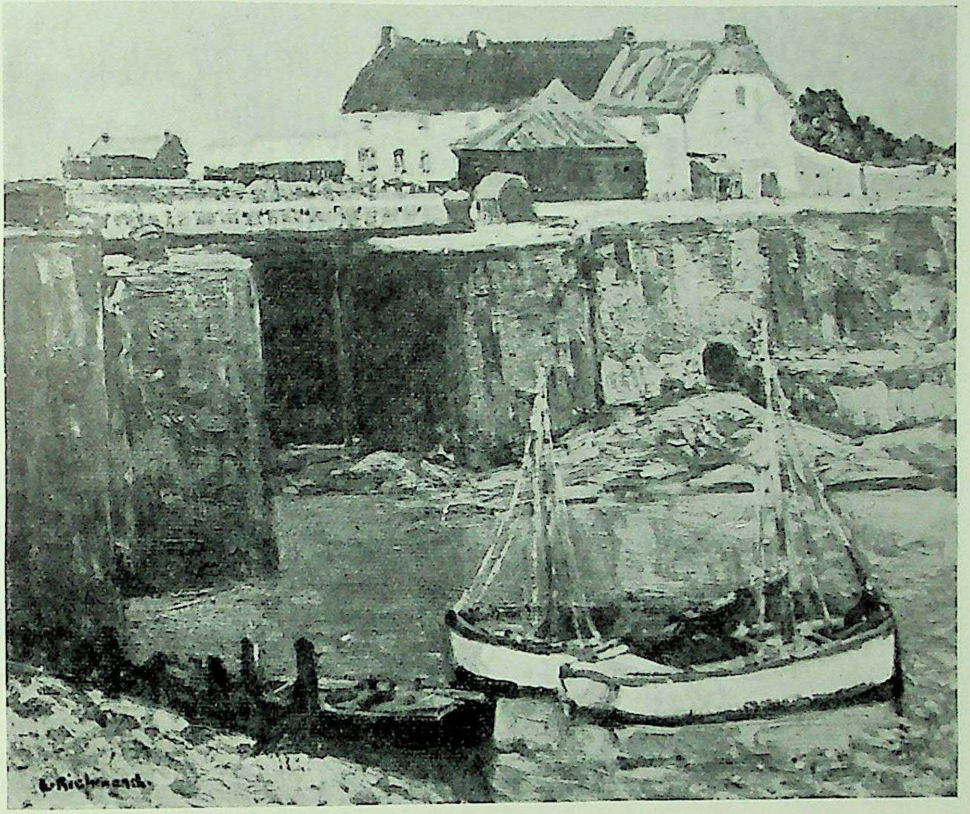

Fig. 28. Finished Picture of "Boats at Porlock Weir, Somerset" (25 in. × 30 in.)

The student should have some knowledge of boat construction. Drawing boats from different viewpoints helps one to understand the main principles of boat-building. This knowledge is most valuable when one is painting rapidly out of doors.

In the case of "San Juan Pueblo, New Mexico" (Fig. 30), representational painting, or painting precisely what one sees out of doors, was all that was necessary for my purpose. The central figure with the light cape hanging vertically downward was most useful, since this one touch of light colour gave—through contrast—real value to all the surrounding tones.

The dark figure at the side of the one with the light cape also helps to accentuate the value of other tones. In a previous chapter I mentioned the importance of not painting windows too dark in colour. I also mentioned that if they are correct in relation to tone they then belong to the surface of the walls of the buildings. There are two or three other items one should notice in this picture. The foliage at the top of the picture, against the sky, helps to frame the buildings below. Nature is very kind to painters and is always giving tips as to what one could and should do. But for this foliage it would have been necessary to paint in some clouds. To do that would have been somewhat unfortunate, because the tone value of light clouds would have interfered with the light-coloured buildings below. The dark shadow at the foot of the picture, which was caused by a tree situated behind the artist, was extremely valuable in giving emphasis to the general composition of the whole subject. Another point of minor interest, but still important to the composition, is the dark hill situated behind the light buildings; also the

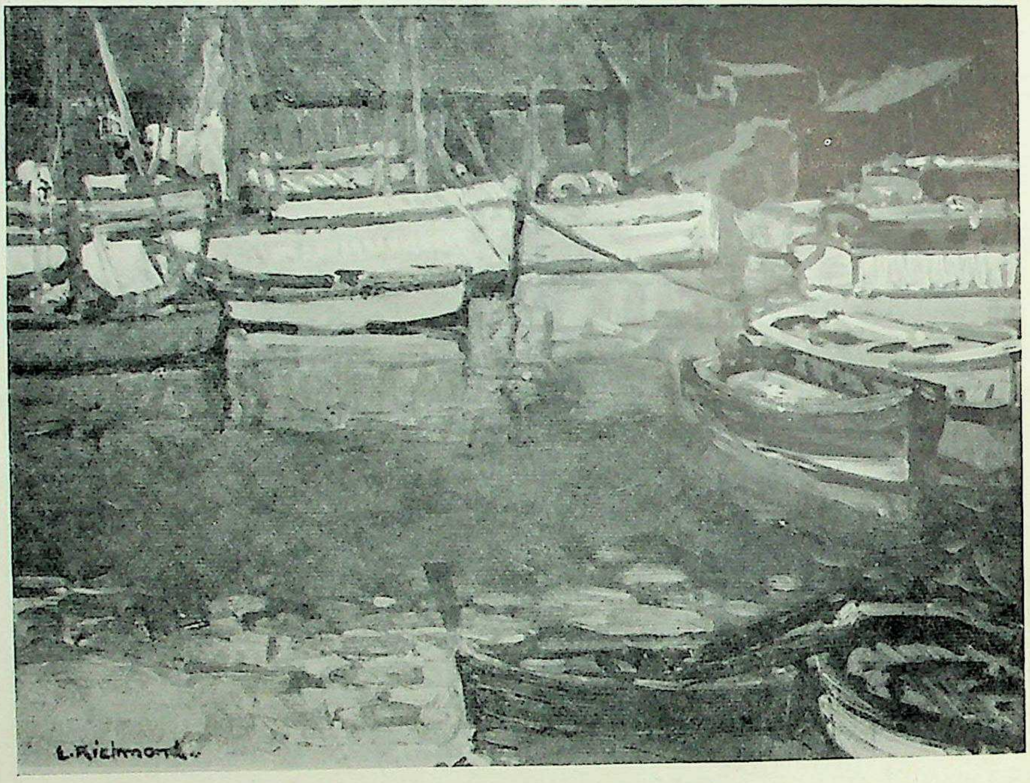

Fig. 29. Compositional Study of Boats

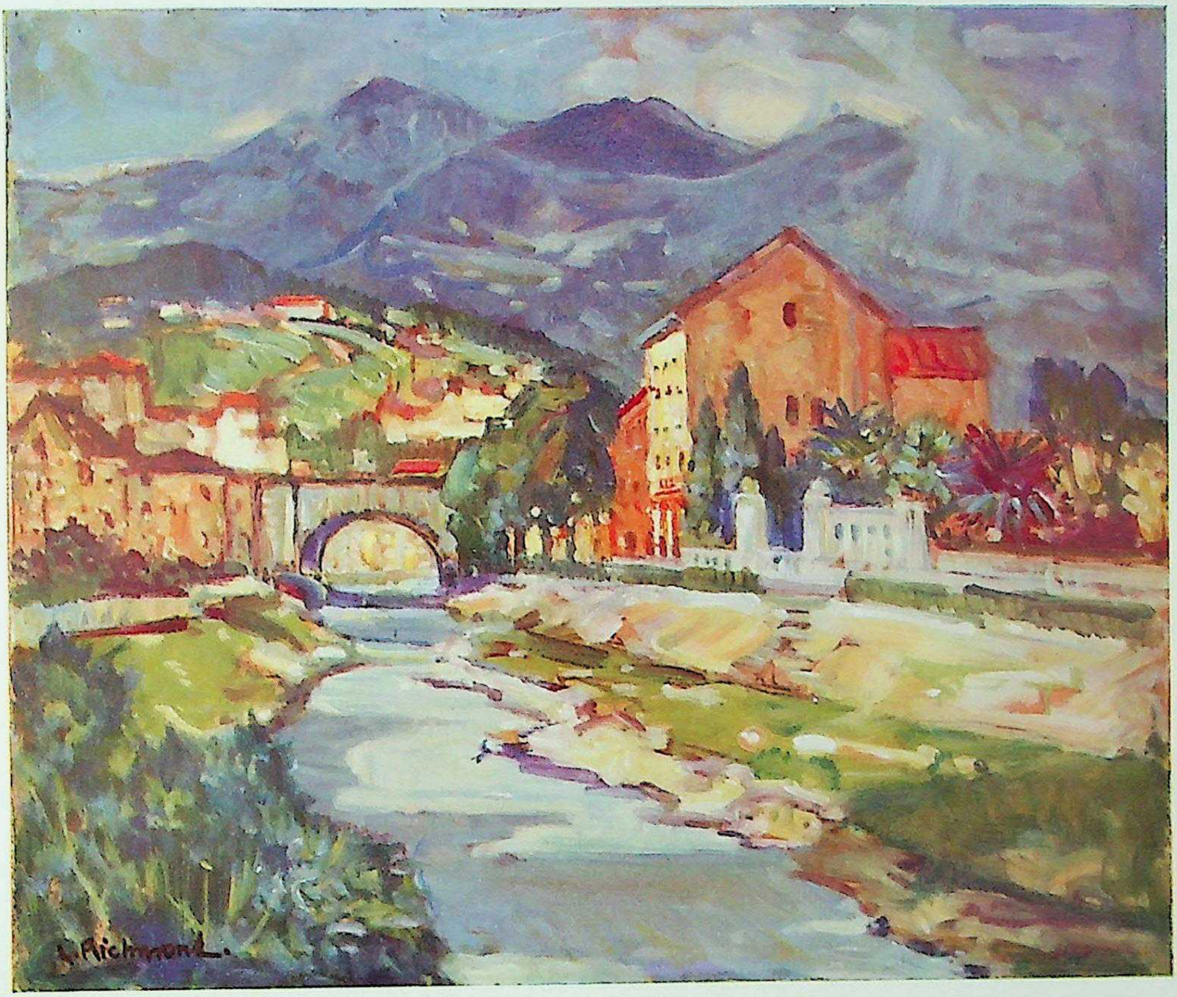

PLATE VIII
Finished Picture of "The River, Menton, France"
(20 in. × 24 in.)

vertical poles cutting across the buildings and horizon. There was no attempt on the part of the artist to emphasize or alter in any way this outdoor subject. Nature had all the answers ready, and all that was necessary for the painter was to represent exactly what he saw in front of him.

For the enthusiastic student of landscape painting there are unlimited opportunities for personal development—provided that he has acquired enough ability to draw and paint direct from nature. By the accumulation of several hundred sketches in oil, water colour, or pastel, and supported by many practical drawings, the student is in a position to paint experimental subjects with every hope of success. There is no short cut or easy way for the potential landscape artist. It is a long road to success, but a most interesting journey.

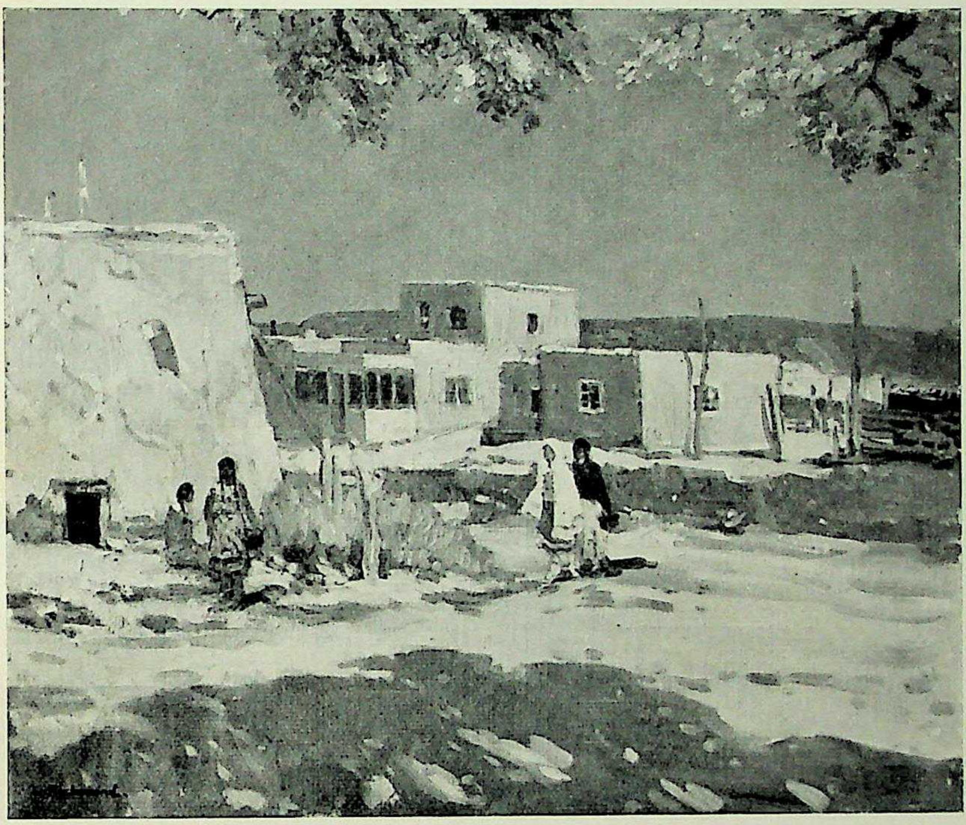

Fig. 30. "San Juan Pueblo, New Mexico"
(25 in. × 30 in.)

Chapter VII

DEVELOPMENT FROM AN OUTDOOR SKETCH

TO BUILD UP a composition from a sketch usually involves the personal expression of the artist, since the design is made to satisfy the "artistic ego" of the painter concerned. It should be—and generally is—a mental exercise free from the restrictions imposed by a slavish copy of nature. The arrangement of various natural features such as distant hills, trees, rivers, winding roads, bridges or clouds, cannot fail to excite the mind of the artist who wishes to depict a given subject in an orderly form and in such a manner that the spectator is able to understand the motif of the picture.

All good pictorial compositions have a focal point, or a central portion of artistic interest in the picture, which plays a major part in the presentation of the subject. If the artist is to achieve success in this important matter of composition, the various natural elements, whether of prior or secondary importance, must be under the direct control of the artist, and any detail or naturalistic forms should be selected or rejected as required. The artist must be the master of his subject.

The picture reproduced in colour entitled "A Dramatic Landscape" (Plate IX) was painted in the studio from an outdoor sketch. No attempt was made to get a finished painting. It may not come under the heading of "Art," but the feeling of liberty to paint just what one wanted gave me a holiday feeling, free from the trammels of sophisticated or suave technique. In other words it was a tonic, or a form of self-indulgence if you like, and this sometimes opens the door to further ideas in art.

The black and white reproduction (Fig. 31) shows the outdoor sketch which was carefully painted in relation to the drawing and various shapes of the actual scene. In the sketch, the winding road on the extreme left side attracts the eye rather unpleasantly and looks like the letter "S," so I decided to leave it out in the final painting.

The coloured reproduction of "A Dramatic Landscape" can also be dramatized with a different composition, as in the sketch shown in Fig. 32. Here more sky is shown, thus helping to give a dramatic effect of rain and windy weather. The river, being quiet in tone, gives a feeling of stability when compared to the wilder elements in the landscape. The low-lying hills

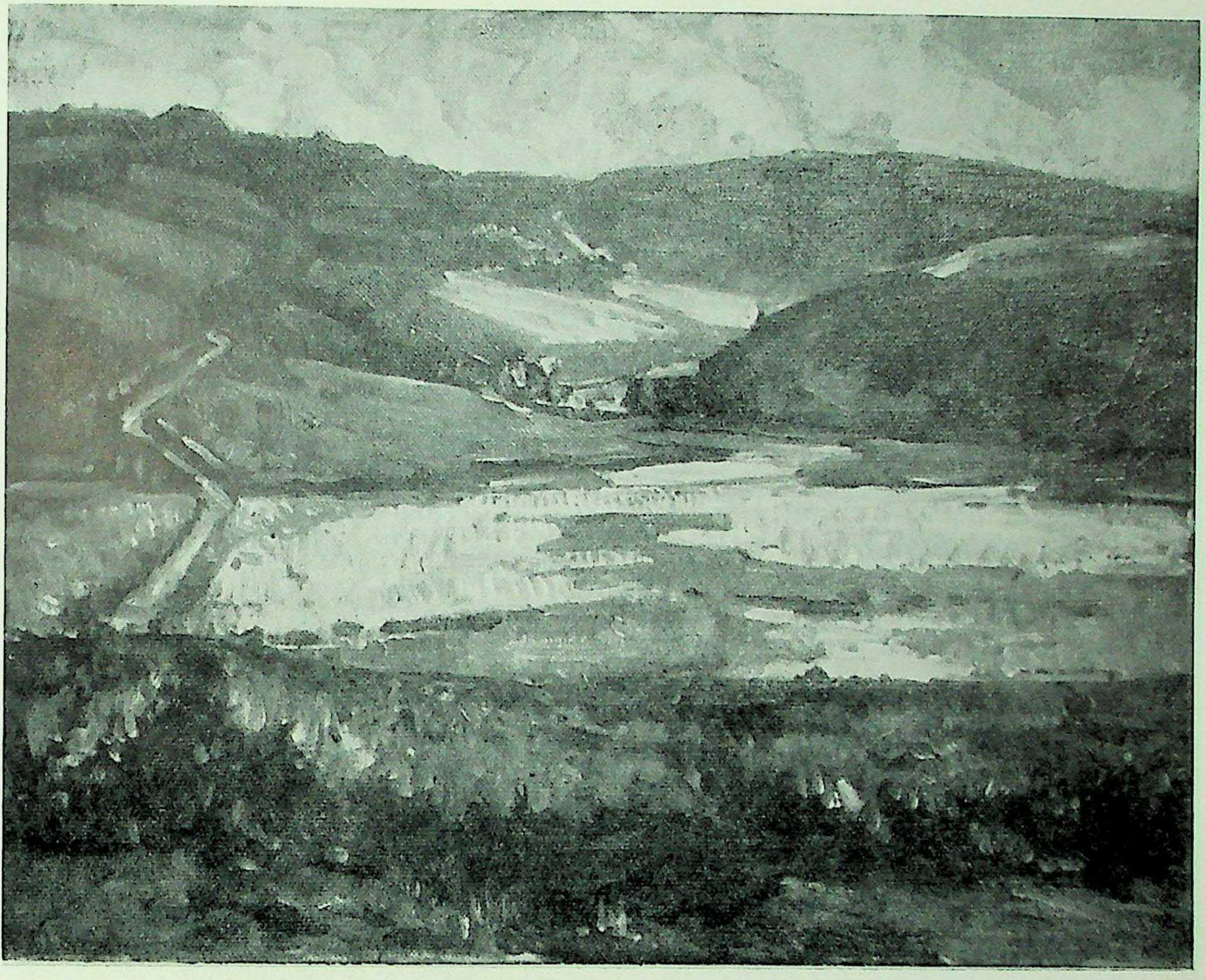

Fig. 31. Outdoor Sketch for "A Dramatic Landscape"
(16 in. × 20 in.)

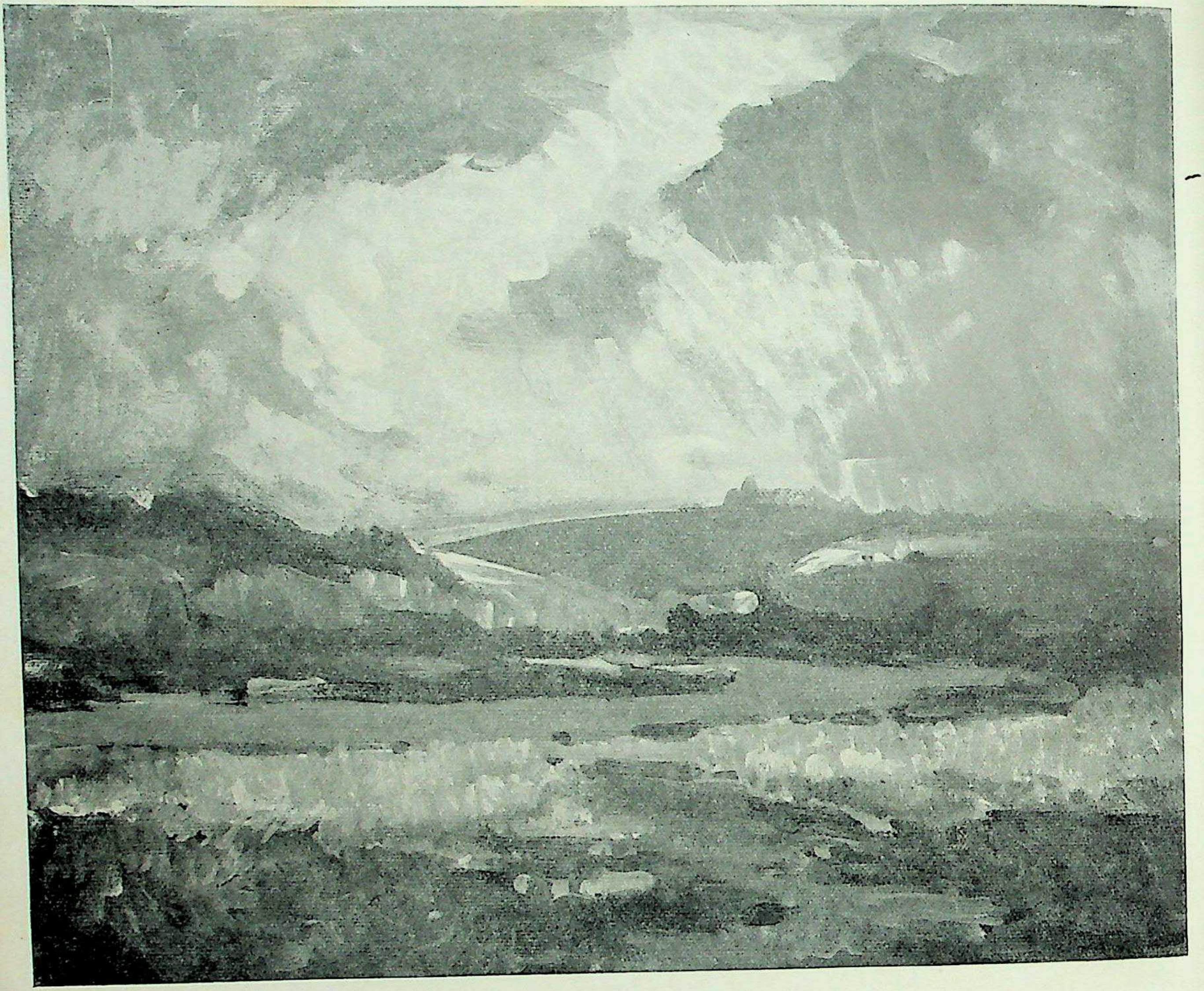

Fig. 32. A Second Interpretation of the Same Subject
(10 in. × 12 in.)

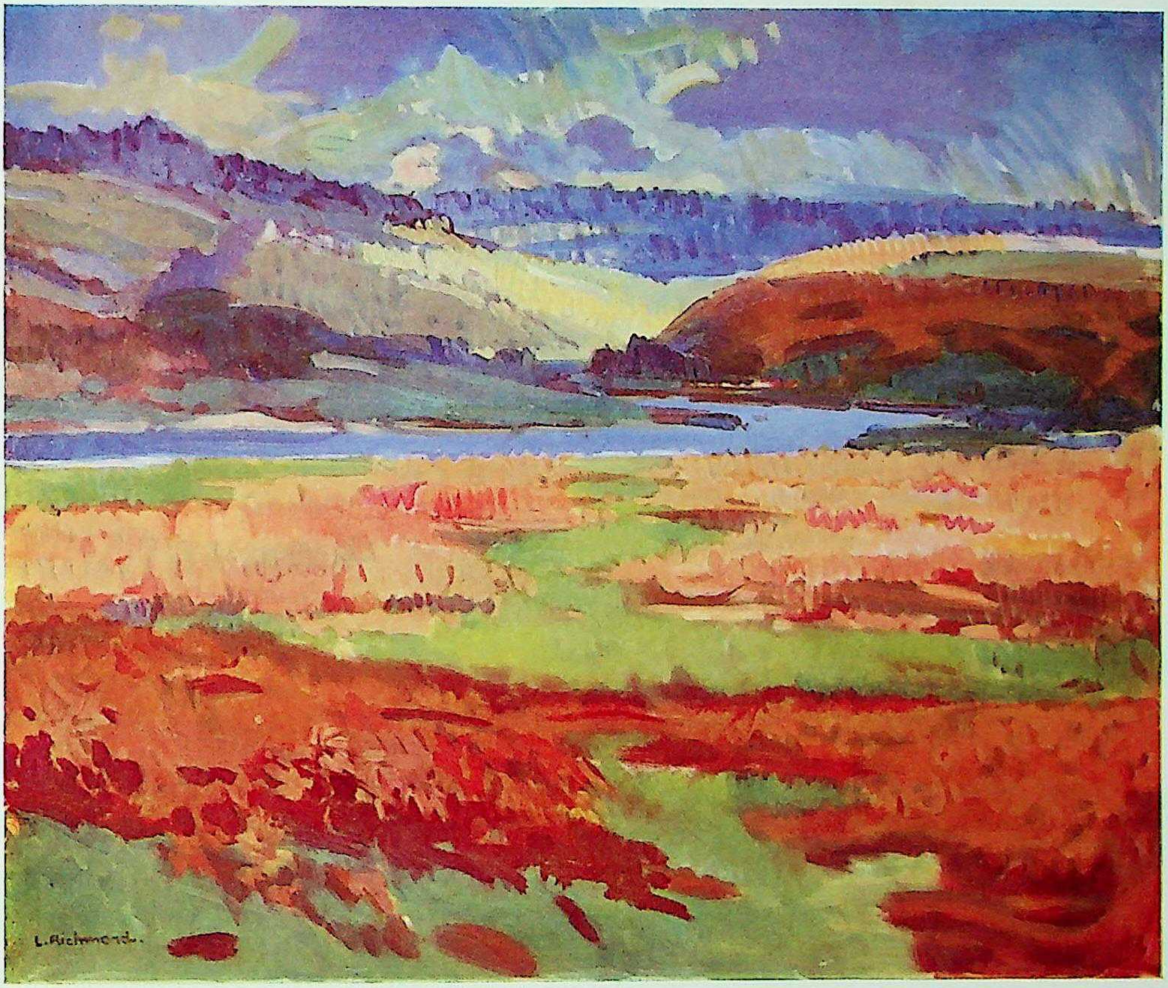

PLATE IX
"A Dramatic Landscape"
(25 in. × 30 in.)

and the dark trees at the foot, and the arrangement of light in the foreground and on the distant hills, all play their part in expressing the plan, or composition, of the subject.

In the finished picture the blue river reflects the bluish sky and was painted simply, without stressing any naturalistic detail. Here also we see more of the width than is visible in the black and white reproduction. The dark clouds and sky are instrumental in showing the effect of sunlight on the nearer hills. The clouds were painted chiefly with deep ultramarine, alizarin crimson, and viridian; but a little ivory black, flake white, and sometimes a touch of burnt sienna were needed to get the requisite tints. The light clouds were made with a mixture of flake white and a little yellow ochre. Viridian, light chrome, flake white, and burnt sienna with a touch of ultramarine blue completed the list for the lighter sky and cloud effects. The colours used for the distant hill were the same as those referred to in the dark clouds section.

Viridian, mixed with a little deep blue and black and painted over a thinly painted ground tint of wet burnt sienna, gave the desired tone for the field adjoining the water's edge on the farther bank. The light-coloured bracken, starting at the nearer side of the river and spreading horizontally across the picture, was painted over a thin wet surface of vermilion and a little burnt sienna. To get this effect, a large quantity of flake white was mixed with yellow ochre together with a small portion of ivory black (well mixed with the white) and painted over the preparatory wet ground in solid touches, but allowing for the ground tint to show through in places.

The centrally placed grass portion amid the light-coloured bracken was comparatively easy to paint. It consisted mostly of viridian, light chrome, and a generous quantity of flake white. Dark-toned bracken, as seen in the nearer foreground, received a lavish quantity of burnt sienna, some touches of vermilion and yellow ochre with the addition of a very little white. The shadow portion of bracken was made with burnt sienna, alizarin crimson, a little flake white, and ivory black.

Viridian only was used for the bright green grass on the left-hand side of the picture, but a little yellow ochre and flake white was necessary to get the colour of the grass spreading away towards the right-hand side of the foreground.

Students who paint woodland scenery often try to paint the subject as it appears to them, but they generally fail to capture the underlying spirit, or the mystery, of deep woods.

The picture of "The Redwood Forest, California" (reproduced in monochrome, Fig. 33), was an approximately accurate rendering from nature of the arrangement of trees, foliage, light, and shadow. The figures in the lower central portion of the picture were painted towards the end of the sitting and were put in chiefly to indicate the height of the tall trees.

There is no attempt in this painting to get a sense of poetry, or quietude, or any element of profound thought. It is fairly easy in outdoor sketching to render a woodland scene in colour, but it is far more difficult to paint a picture that expresses the feelings of the artist in addition to using naturalistic forms.

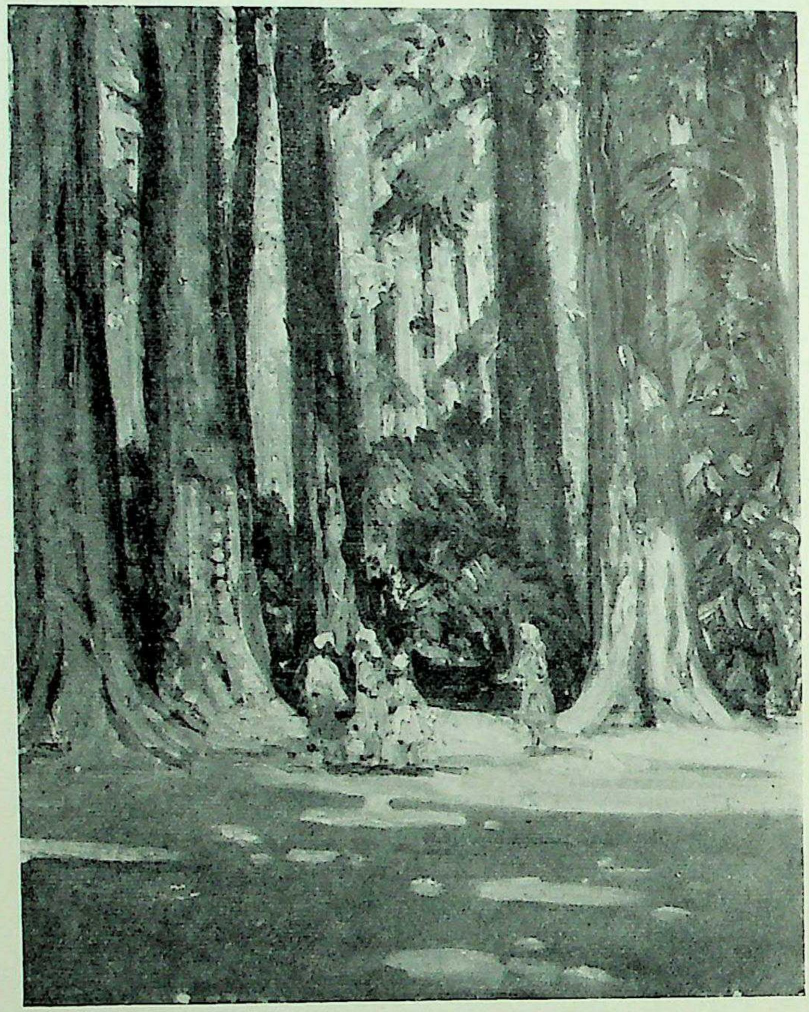

Fig. 33. "The Redwood Forest, California"
(26 in. × 20 in.)

In the studio I tried several times to achieve something of artistic interest.

After many failures I thought it might be more useful to indicate the subject through a simpler method. For that purpose I painted the whole of a canvas with one tone only. While the paint was still wet I used a clean rag. Then by dipping a small portion of the rag in turpentine and washing out some of the wet ground, I was able to suggest vertical passages of light. The rag must be constantly dipped in turpentine and kept clean during the time taken for washing out colour. Fig. 34 shows the result of this treatment.

The intelligent artist, when handling this form of technique, sometimes discovers—often by accident—some motif which can later be consolidated into pictorial expression. Using Fig. 34 as a basis for a picture, I made a similar composition when painting the finished woodland study shown in Fig. 35. The black and white illustration of the Redwood Forest proved of considerable help for reference during the final painting. The light in the finished woodland painting is centralized in the composition. This striking effect of light is helped through contrast by the adjoining dark tree-trunks on each side of the picture.

Avoid painting a woodland scene which might be described as "a pretty picture." To absorb the profundity of a subject it is essential for the artist to be alone when working.

As I have said, the artist's freedom as the designer of his picture is a golden opportunity to create an individual expression of his own artistic ego. I wonder how many of us, who build up compositions from natural, outdoor, colour studies, have taken the trouble to study the multiple colours of nature. Most people I have conversed with on this subject appear to have been content with observing the obvious colours one usually sees in any landscape effect—as, for instance, a blue sky, green trees, yellow cornfields, red roofs, and so on. What so many of us miss in nature are the sensitive colours comprising those tints, made up of a mixture from the more positive or primary colours. In this direction we have a vast field for investigation. The only way to discover the more refined naturalistic colours is to study the effect of changing light during the day on certain outdoor objects, such as flowers, fields, grass, and so on. Those who take the trouble to do this cannot fail to be interested in seeing how ordinary natural landscape subjects change their tints during the course of twelve hours.

I wrote part of this chapter out of doors about two miles from the Pacific Ocean and forty miles south of San Francisco. In front of me there were several different species of bright-tinted flowers supported by a wealth of green-tinted leaves. Without any difficulty I could count at least twenty varying tints among the leaves. The untrained eye might have seen only two or three shades of green.

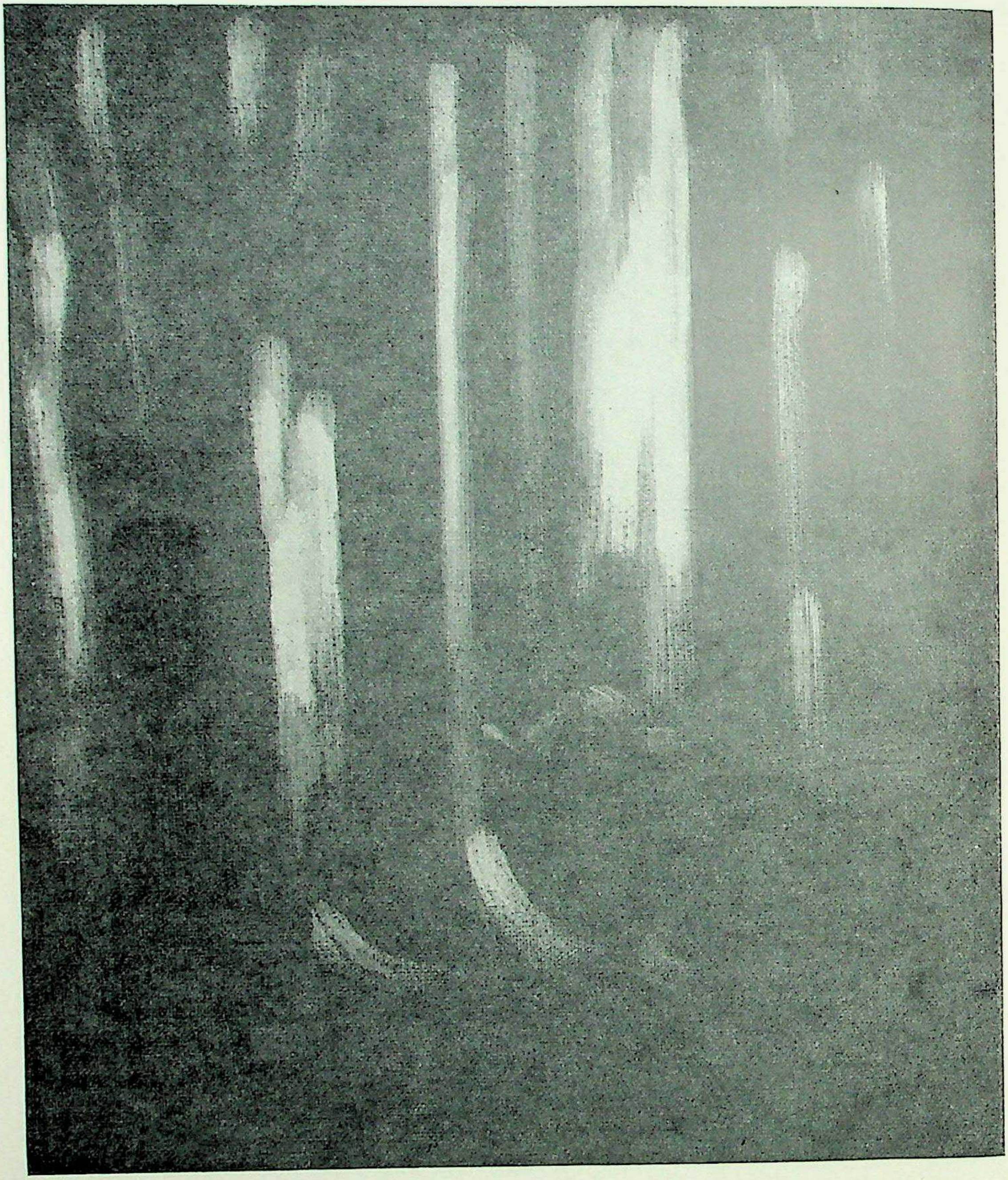

Fig. 34. Suggestive Treatment of Woodland Scene—First Stage

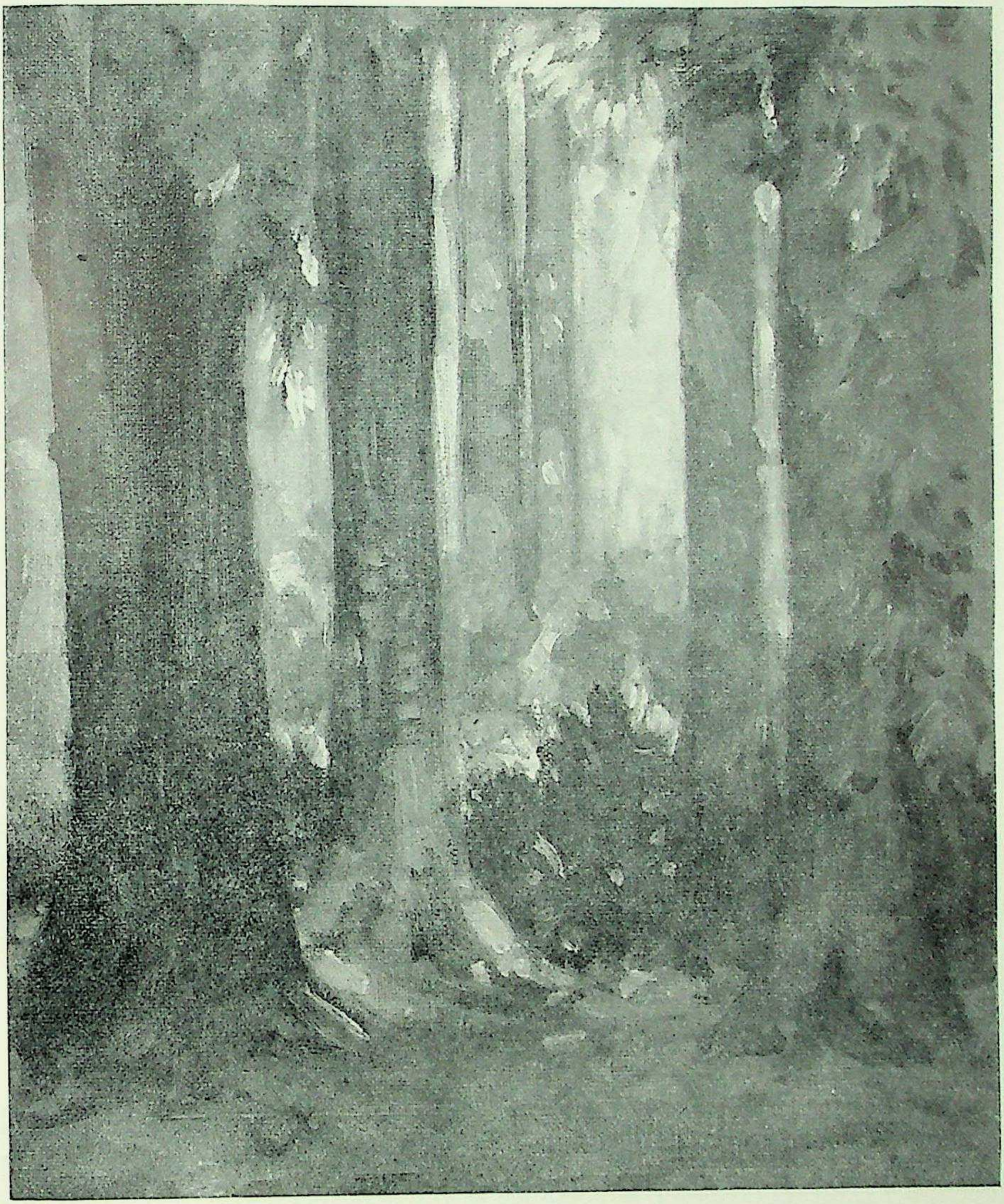

Fig. 35. Suggestive Treatment of Woodland Scene—Second Stage

Constant outdoor sketching is most valuable to those who are genuinely interested in obtaining knowledge of the great store-house of colour which nature holds in readiness for those who are able to seek out and find its hidden beauties. The information thus acquired is most valuable to those artists who wish to improvise or re-design the building up of a picture from natural studies.

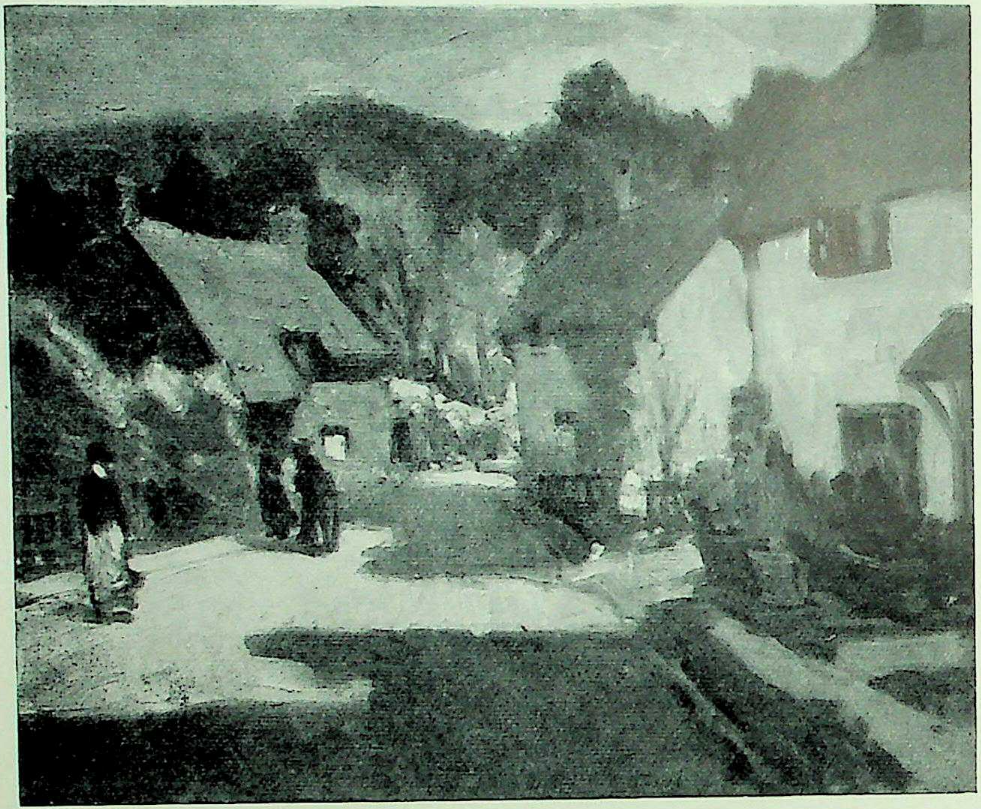

Fig. 36. "Cottages at Dunster, Somerset"
(20 in. × 24 in.)

The black and white reproduction entitled "Cottages at Dunster, Somerset" (Fig. 36) was chosen for the purpose of demonstrating a pictorial build-up of three cottages. Obviously they were arranged so that they could occupy a position of major importance in the general composition.

The dark trees and landscape behind the cottages enhance their value, and the vivid horizontal light spreading across the road in the foreground has an echo in the same horizontal formation connecting the two cottages in the central part of the picture. The sky was dark in tone in the original painting, thus helping the spectator to concentrate on the more important material below.

Tone value and colour are an integral part of the picture and of the artist's self-expression. Thus the artist needs to build up his background of knowledge of colour, to make opportunities for experiments, and to remember what he learns from these, so that he sets to work unhampered by doubts and hesitations.

Chapter VIII

DIRECT PAINTING

"THE RIVER SEINE, near Les Andelys, France," reproduced in colour in Plate X, was painted in one sitting of about one and a half hours. There was no time to make a charcoal outline or even to give much thought as to what the answer would be in relation to colour, composition, and general pictorial effect. The river, which had overflowed its banks in places, gave a certain amount of variety to the subject. No attempt was made to achieve violent light and shadow effects, since it was a grey afternoon, and the lighting therefore had to be in accordance with the weather conditions. The immediate foreground, which is yellowish in tint although fairly light in tone, was painted with a restrained colour palette, consisting of yellow ochre, a little black, flake white, middle cadmium, and a suggestion of burnt sienna. The warm tinted foreground was extremely valuable in giving contrast through tonal emphasis to all the various greens, dark blues, greys, etc., as they recede in the distance. A sense of scale is suggested by the small buildings with their reddish roofs lying in the deep valley. They also help to assess the height of trees and the large area of the surrounding landscape. I found it very important to keep the tone of the water quiet and greyish-yellow in colour. One could imagine how easy it would be to destroy the serenity of this subject had the water been painted with bright blue instead of a quiet, restrained tint. It should be unnecessary to mention so obvious a point, but unfortunately many students often make a mistake in their outdoor painting by using a colour entirely out of keeping with the general orchestration of colour in the subject.

The quick, observant mind, painting with speed and enthusiasm, has no time for trivialities. The sketch should be broadly painted with correct tone values. To the student who has not had much experience in landscape sketching, I would recommend small boards or panels not more than about four inches by six inches. He then can make a series of quick, outdoor studies, always remembering that the friendly relations of one colour with the surrounding colours is of the utmost importance in achieving unity of tone.

The outdoor painting of the River Seine left no time for subtle passages of detailed tones or intricate items. It is a practical example of a direct approach

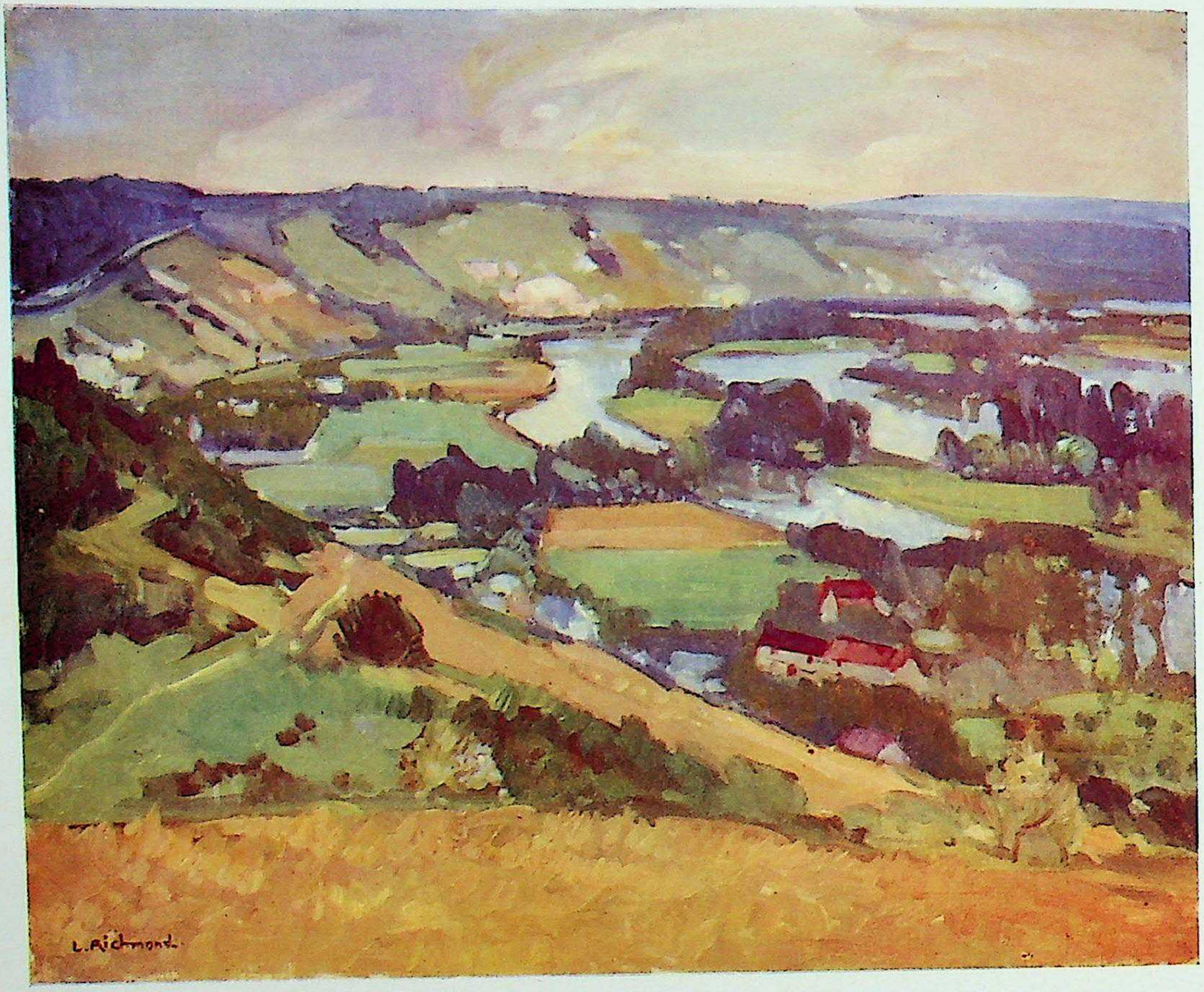

PLATE X
"The River Seine, near Les Andelys, France"
(20 in. × 24 in.)

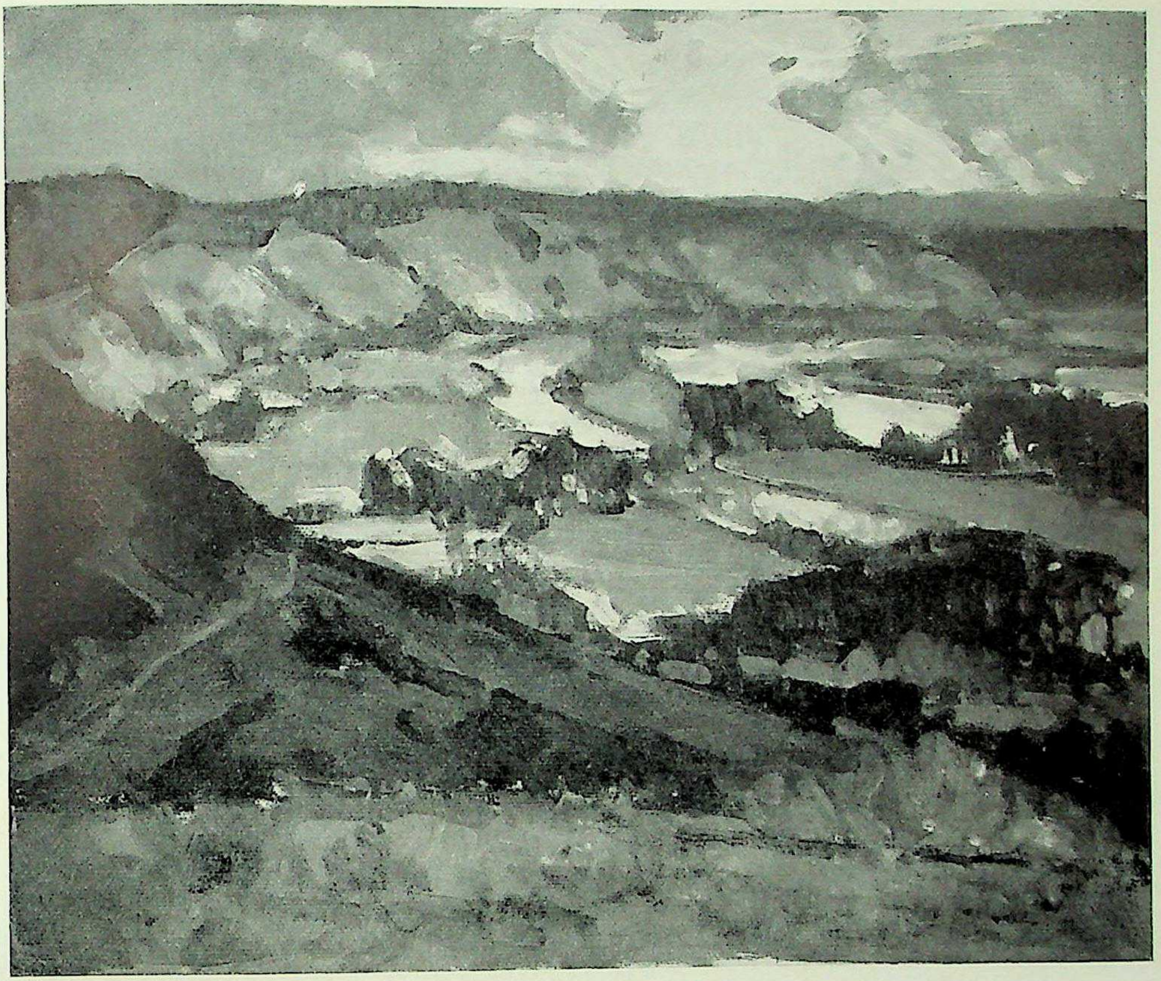

Fig. 37. Another Interpretation of "The River Seine, near Les Andelys, France"
(10 in. × 12 in.)

to nature. It is quite possible for a student who has painted a good constructive sketch out of doors to use the same sketch in the studio and improvise from the original sketch to try and express his own artistic vision. This problem, however, is much easier to solve by making other colour studies of the same subject, showing different effects of light and shadow.

A good many of the greens seen in the River Seine painting were made with viridian, yellow ochre, and a little flake white. Deep ultramarine blue mixed with other colours restrained its intensity. An interesting russet green can be made with ivory black, deep chrome yellow, and a little flake white. One can then vary this russet colour by mixing a little viridian with these three colours. Then, of course, a little ultramarine blue added with the viridian helps to create another sensation of green. The earnest student can profitably spend a great deal of time experimenting indoors on the production of various greens: about fifty different tints can readily be discovered; and the knowledge and experience thus gained are extremely useful for rapid outdoor painting. There are, of course, thousands of other colours that one can evolve from personal experiments.

The black and white illustration, Fig. 37, is another interpretation of the original subject, with the same composition. In the coloured reproduction there is an over-all effect of light and tone. In the black and white demonstration the foreground was kept dark so as to emphasize a passage of sunlight spreading right across the middle distance. Also there is a dramatic touch in the breaking of the clouds above the distant hills. One could paint several different versions of the same subject. Students are advised to experiment with their own pictures. By doing so their vision will be enlarged and their progress in art more substantial.

Curiously enough most students, or beginners in landscape art, paint clouds with considerable freedom. This may be partly due to their aloofness, or lack of solid shape, which gives students the feeling of liberty in form and colour. I have often seen a good cloud study by a beginner in painting, whereas the same beginner has failed in an attempt at more solid or more material landscape shapes, such as houses, bridges, and so on.

It is important when painting the sky and clouds to suggest a sense of distance. For instance, the nearer clouds at the top of the picture are theoretically larger in formation than the clouds farther away, so that the clouds approaching the horizon appear smaller, thus helping to give the feeling of distance. In Fig. 38 this has been demonstrated by showing the nearer clouds larger in size; lower down in the picture they appear progressively smaller, until they reach the horizon. This is a valuable method for good landscape painting. Sometimes, of course, one sees very large circular

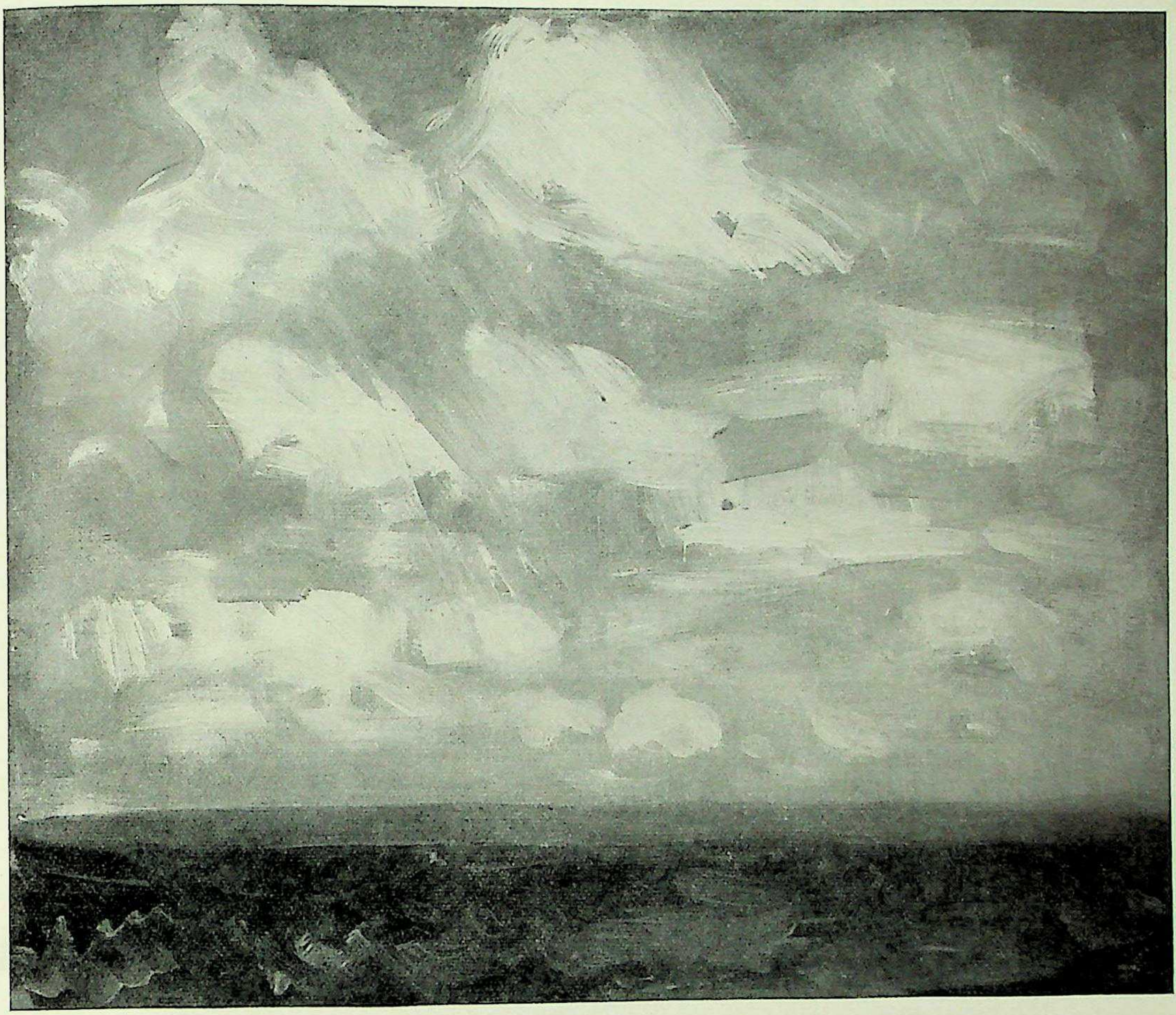

Fig. 38. Aerial Perspective of Clouds

clouds adjoining the horizon, but I would recommend students to avoid painting that unusual form of aerial perspective until they have mastered the more logical schemes.

Another item which is sometimes neglected is the affinity between the sky and the subject below. In Fig. 38 the tone of the lower clouds meets the distant horizon without destroying the sense of space. The distant landscape should therefore be painted lighter in tone than the nearer foreground. The student must realize if he is to paint clouds with success that any attempt to achieve a perfect formation will handicap him severely. Paint them, therefore, with freedom and ease.

On a stormy day, with quick-moving clouds, there is no opportunity to paint precisely the subject in front of one. The best method to adopt under these conditions is to paint with two tones only. Fig. 39 should explain my meaning. Here there is a dark cloud at the top of the picture, very vivid and eager-looking, with remnants of other clouds swinging across below. It is impossible to paint wind-driven clouds unless you are quite sure what method you mean to adopt to express the strength of the gale and the direction of the wind. In this instance the wind is blowing from the right-hand side and playing havoc with cloud formation. By using two tones only one can arrive at some positive result. This type of effect lasts only about a minute, and sometimes not as long as that. So one has to rely on a good memory in order to retain a pattern which has some affinity to naturalistic phenomena.

Fig. 40 was painted over the previous example. The formation or pattern is kept more or less intact. To the accomplished painter whose technique offers no difficulties, the final painting of sky and clouds, and particularly a storm effect, is most exhilarating. In the finished study the dark cloud pattern is lightened in tone, and the half-tone is also lightened in places, particularly at the top portion of the sketch. Even when painting the finished picture one should not be too circumspect or too orthodox, since clouds when blown by fierce gales do not obey any fixed laws. So as to keep the eye concentrated on the dramatic dark cloud formation at the top of the picture, the lower section was painted lighter in tone.

Students are advised to paint clouds as often as possible. It is excellent discipline and many discoveries can be made that way. But never paint clouds, particularly strong sweeping clouds, without intense enthusiasm.

The black and white illustration, "Dunster Castle, Somerset" (Fig. 41), is correct in tone value. The castle, which is surrounded by trees, is made predominant by the elimination of detail in the tree foliage. It was a most delightful morning when I painted this subject; there was a certain amount of mist in the valley, and delicate light-bluish smoke rising from the distant

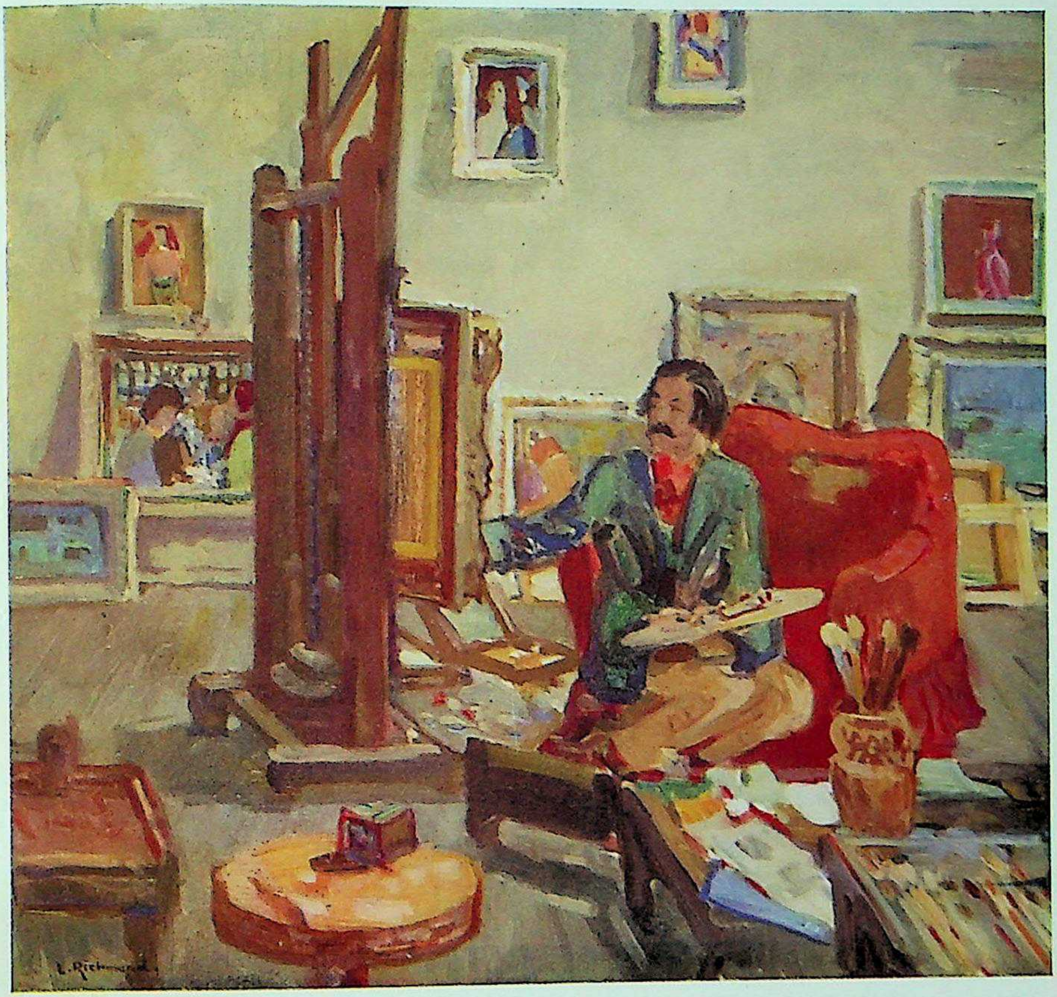

PLATE XI
"David Cox in his Studio"
(24 in. × 30 in.)

buildings, which helped to give an atmosphere pleasing to an artist. This elusive background acted as an excellent foil to the octagonal market building on the right, the shadow on the road, and the taller building on the left-hand side. Before painting the subject, I noticed carefully the direction of the light of the sun on the roadside buildings receding towards the distance. The light also touched gently, but effectively, on each chimney. As the morning advanced, the changing position of the sun altered the subject, and the first light and shadow effect gradually merged into another pattern that was not so pleasing as the one with which I had started. Since the subject was painted in one sitting, I kept clearly in my mind what I had seen in the first half-hour. In fact, I found this easier to manage because, when first studying my subject before beginning to paint, I had established a clear conception of what I ought to do to complete the painting.

When painting windows with the light full on them, students should be careful not to make them too dark in tone; otherwise they appear to be in front of the building instead of in the wall of the building itself. (For demonstrations of drawing windows see Figs. 17, 18.) In my sketch it should be noticed that the windows in the farther cottages are only just indicated, with light touches, and that the nearer windows are slightly deeper in tone. This all helps to give the relative values of aerial perspective.

Sometimes when painting a subject of this sort one is liable to forget the original shapes of shadows on the road or buildings; if the student wishes to retain his first impressions he is well advised to spend two or three minutes on making little diagrammatic sketches of the relative positions of light and shadow, to which he can refer when necessary. Dunster Village, with the distant castle, has been painted by hundreds of artists. It is a romantic subject, and attracts a large number of sightseers. The composition is almost perfect, and photographers and painters have a happy time since no alterations are necessary for either of them.

"Morning Light" (Fig. 42) I found an extremely difficult subject to paint because there was very little difference in tone value between the middle distance and the far distance. In order to achieve anything like success, I had to go out three times to paint the scene, and I made many alterations before I was satisfied with the picture. It required the keenest observation, not only from the drawing standpoint but also in the matter of colour. There were many colours in this outdoor subject, and I managed to get most of them into the painting; but all the time I was under the discipline of recording the various tones with accuracy, in all the delicacy that one finds in the early morning light. In an art exhibition this painting might well be unnoticed by the general public. It is the type of picture that one needs to see away from

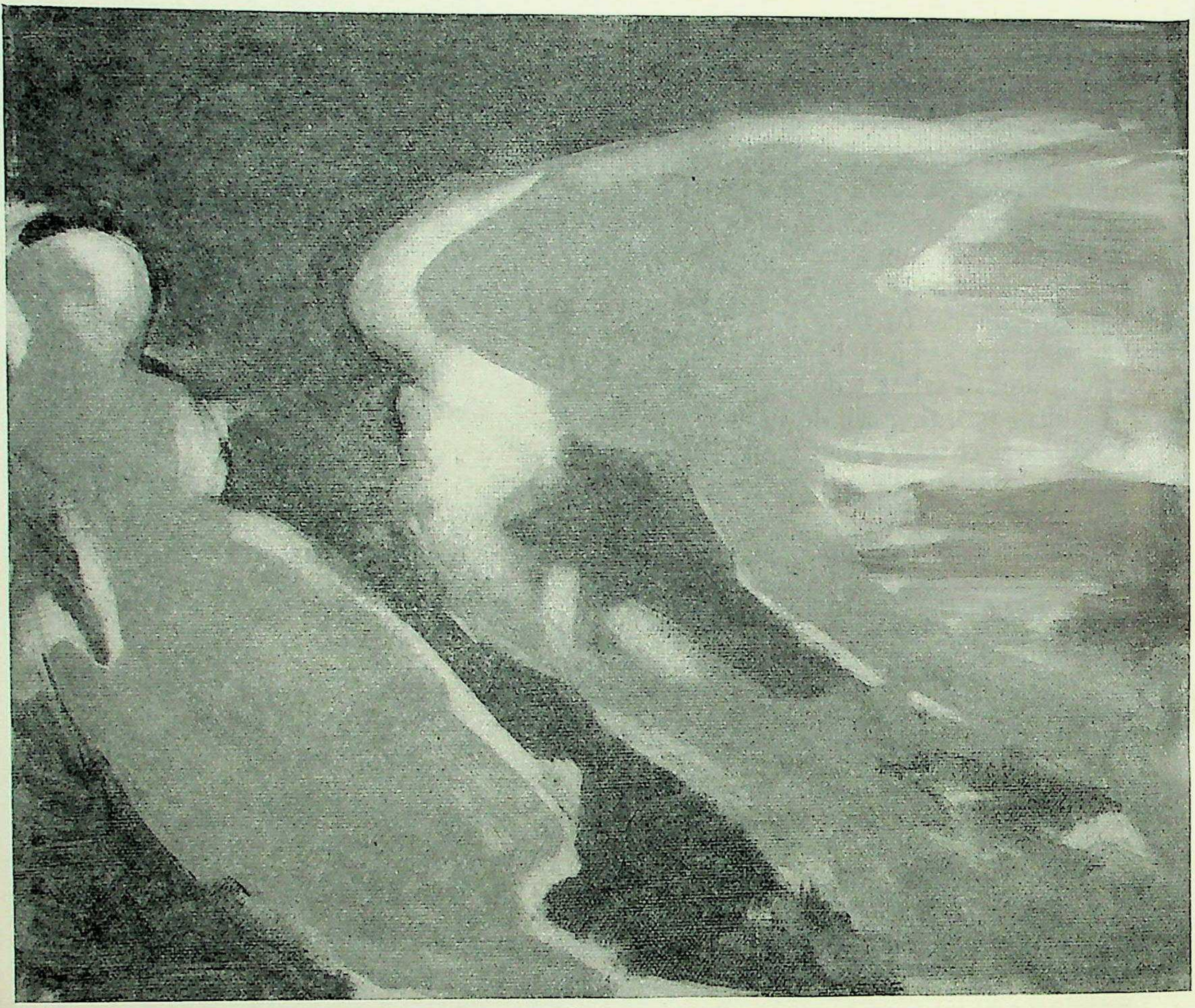

Fig. 39. Storm Clouds—First Stage

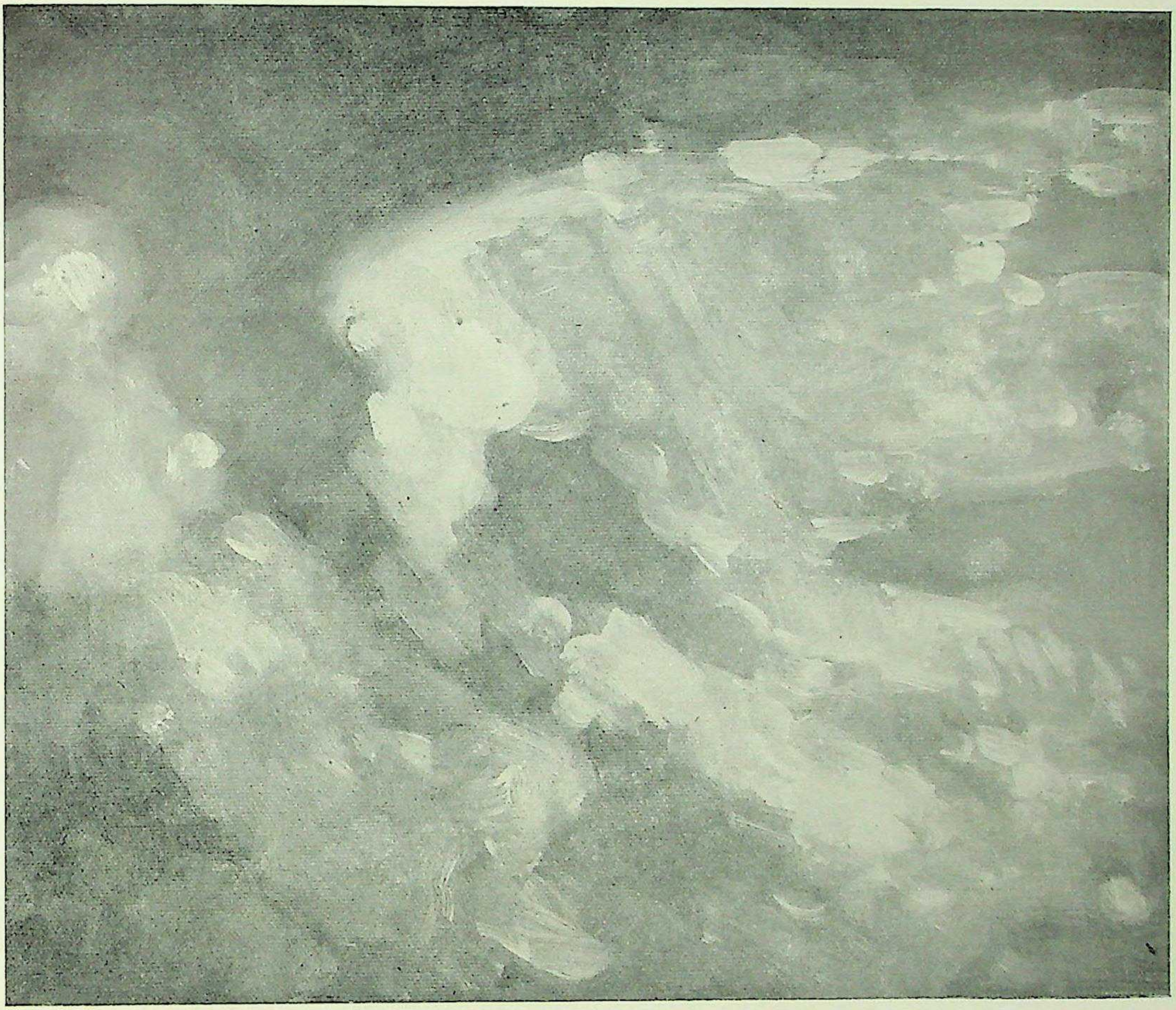

Fig. 40. Storm Clouds—Second Stage

any other paintings, as its sensitivity is likely to be lost in conjunction with more astringent or brightly-coloured subjects. "A Dramatic Landscape" (Plate IX) was a far easier subject to paint than the one entitled "Morning Light." A landscape artist should aim at being able to interpret all of nature's moods, as a good actor or actress is usually capable of expressing many character types on the stage. I know of several instances, however, in which an artist who has made a success in one subject has, through the repetition of this subject, gradually declined in his art and also in the sales of his pictures. The art student who wishes to make solid progress in landscape painting can derive much benefit from a series of careful pencil studies of such things as trees, boats (with reflections on the water), buildings, and so on. I make detailed pencil drawings as a background support for those subjects that I

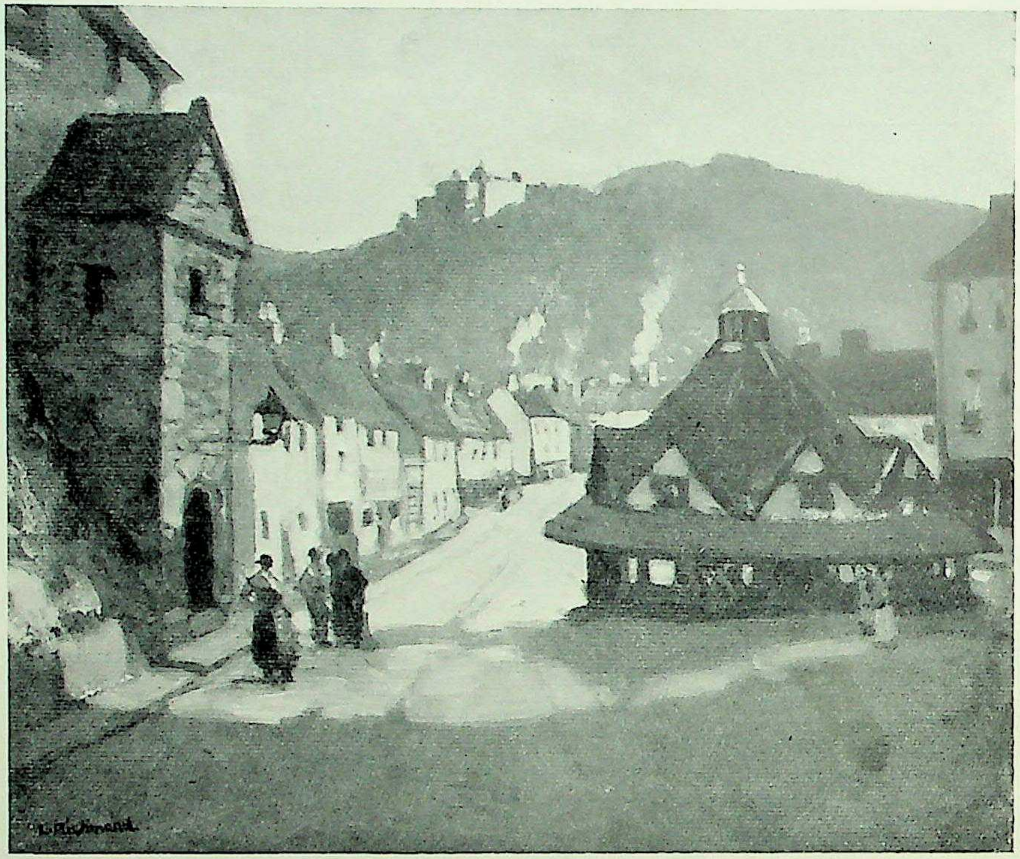

Fig. 41. "Dunster Castle, Somerset"
(20 in. × 24 in.)

have originally painted out of doors. During the winter months I find these landscape drawings really valuable as references for certain shapes that were not clearly stated in my colour sketches. Some of these drawings can be reinforced with delicate water colour washes, so as to solidify essential forms

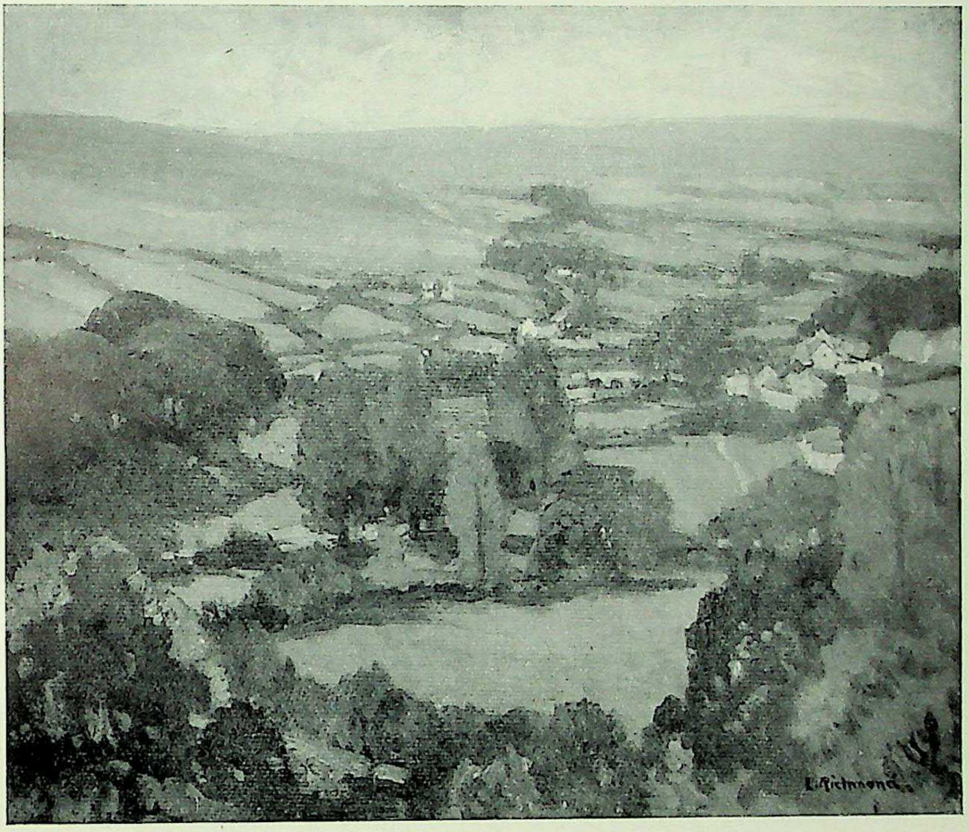

Fig. 42. "Morning Light"
(20 in. × 24 in.)

necessary for the painting of the finished picture, and to record lighting effects.

Before the final landscape picture is started, several compositional alterations are sometimes necessary, so that the subject can be made clear enough to convey the artistic message to others. Students are therefore well advised to make several small suggestive pencil sketches of varying compositions, thus enabling them to select the best one for their purpose.

Chapter IX

PAINTING INTERIORS

THERE IS PLENTY of scope for imagination in the painting of interiors. Before starting on the picture the artist should try to absorb the atmosphere of the subject, so that he may be able to interpret it with artistic understanding. For instance, if he were commissioned to paint a stately *salon* or room in a royal palace, he would be well advised to acquire in advance some historical information relating to previous royal dignitaries who may have resided there; also he should have some knowledge of the lives and characters of the present occupants, so that, when painting the interior, he would be well equipped mentally to deal with the subject as a work of art, not as a photographic impression.

In the case of the painting entitled "A Chelsea Studio" (shown in the frontispiece), I decided not to commence this subject for some two days, so that I could spend my time absorbing the atmosphere and feeling of antiquity. It is a very old studio, which demanded a romantic approach. Later, I discovered considerable charm in the designs suggested by the crumbling walls with their sensitive colour schemes.

The subject was painted in the winter under foggy conditions, which helped considerably to enhance its artistic value. Most of us respond readily to the effect gained by sunlight, when painting either indoors or out of doors; yet artistically this can sometimes be a drawback, especially for interior painting, as each object or piece of furniture, or even rugs on the floor, under the effect of bright sunlight become obvious and often too assertive. The effect produced by sunlight is rarely helpful for romantic or suggestive painting.

From a pictorial angle the main object for successful interior painting is unity of tone. Without this the whole picture is bound to fail, however clever the artist may be in drawing, colour, and composition. Therefore the tonality of any subject, whether it be landscape, figure, still life, or interior, is of primary importance to the artist. To paint a colour too dark in tone, or conversely too light, destroys the sentiment or message of the picture. Even well-known artists sometimes fail to achieve the correct relations of various contrasting tones in their paintings. A great deal of difficulty can be avoided if the student, after deciding on the subject, will first make two or three small colour sketches, aiming chiefly at getting correct tone and good colour.

Some time ago, I painted a picture in my studio at St. Ives Harbour, Cornwall, on a 50 in. × 40 in. canvas. Previous to starting on the large canvas, I made four small outdoor studies in oil colours, together with enough detailed pencil drawings to cover the whole area space of the scene. I was thus able to concentrate with clarity on the final painting, since all the problems of tone, composition, and drawing had been solved in advance. The result of this serious preparation led to a happy sequel, as the picture was awarded a silver medal in the Paris Salon of 1947. I mention this to verify my former statement that one should tackle certain subjects with a good deal of preparation before starting the final painting.

I was very fortunate in the colour scheme of the Chelsea Studio, particularly with the screen on the model's throne on the left, with its vermilion border. This colour can be seen in other parts of the picture, thus keeping the eye from dwelling solely on the attractive vermilion-tinted screen. Suggestive tints of vermilion and reddish colour are noticeable in the small stool placed at the lower right-hand side of the picture, as well as in the portrait on the easel, and to a minor degree in the rug on the floor; also in the picture leaning against the dark cabinet on the left and the other two portraits on the wall.

When I was painting this picture I left out quite a lot of detail in order to get breadth of vision, especially in regard to the design of the rug on the floor, the modelled bust placed on the dark cabinet on the left, and other parts of the picture. It may be of interest to know that the design of the coloured decoration in the top part of the screen was accidentally produced by remnants of paint which were scraped off the artist's palette and put indiscriminately on this portion of the screen. It looks rather like Chinese lacquer work, a most pleasant illusion, distinctly helpful for the suggestive pictorial design that I wanted.

Most artists derive some aesthetic pleasure when they paint dilapidated walls. Leonardo da Vinci, in one of his treatises on painting, described the value of looking for unusual designs on crumbling or broken walls caused chiefly by damp and decay. When painting crumbling walls it is important not to exaggerate the effect of broken surfaces, otherwise they would cease to look flat and would also be liable to attract undue attention at the expense of unity of tone. But happy accidents of design should be noted and used appropriately.

There is a certain dramatic feeling in the composition or design of the studio interior. The screen with the fabric behind rises in a striking manner to the top part of the picture. This in itself attracts attention; but so as not to make the dramatic effect on the left side too obvious, the composition is

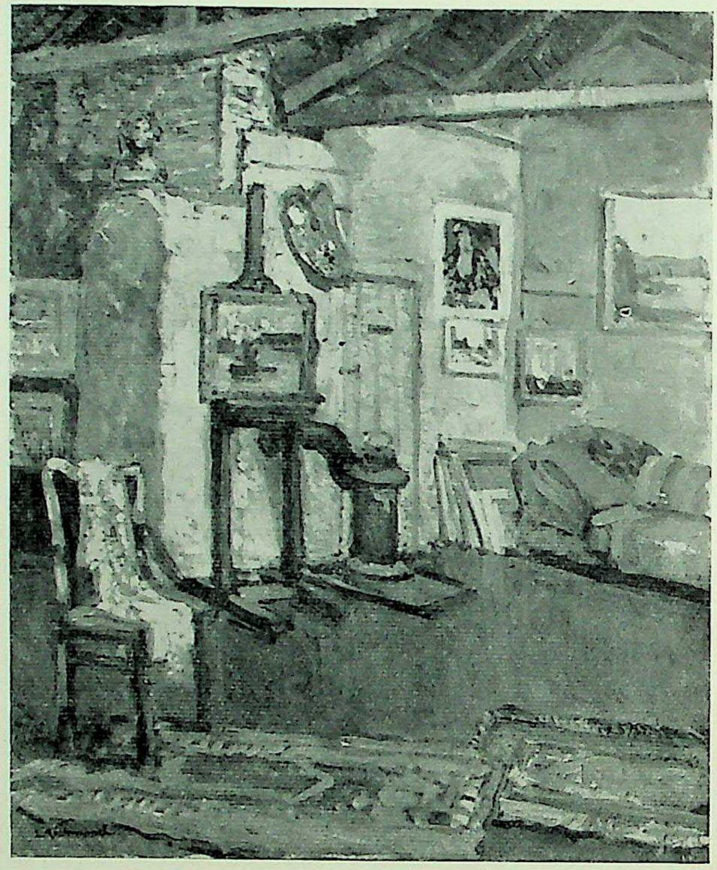

Fig. 43. Sketch for "A St. Ives Studio, Cornwall"
(30 in. × 25 in.)

counter-balanced by the dark-toned floor, which helps to lead the eye to the dark material behind the portrait on the easel.

The two black and white reproductions of interiors (Figs. 43 and 44) were chosen to demonstrate the advantage of composing a somewhat involved subject from a sketch which has been painted fairly quickly without giving much attention to spacing or the general decorative effect. The finished picture probably lacked certain vital touches when compared to the more virile sketch, which was painted on a 30 in. × 25 in. canvas. The size of the finished painting is 40 in. × 32 in., being less wide in proportion than the sketch, and gains accordingly in the sense of height and dignity.

It is sometimes difficult with black and white reproductions, to describe precisely the colour effects portrayed by the artist. On the other hand, one can gain some information regarding composition and tone. The illustration of the finished interior shows a general tonality—or unity—of the whole picture, thus helping to produce an harmonious result. If the black and white reproduction of the sketch is compared with that of the finished picture, the difference in composition can be seen at a glance, since both were painted from the same subject.

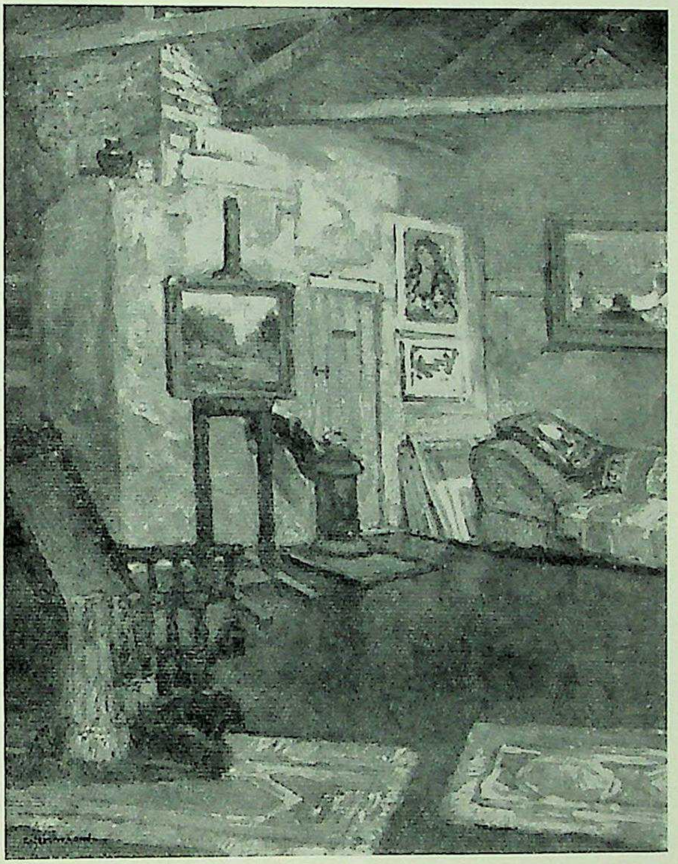

Fig. 44. Finished Painting of "A St. Ives Studio, Cornwall"
(40 in. × 32 in.)

The sketch is a literal rendering of objects, as seen in the studio. The finished painting shows a rearrangement of most of these objects. In the sketch illustration a picture hanging on the distant wall towards the right is too light in tone (particularly in the sky), so that it ceases to be in correct tonal relation to its surroundings.

In the other illustration it is noticeable that the picture on the right is much lower in tone. It also belongs to the wall on which it is placed, and does not detract unduly from its general surroundings. The ceiling, together with the wall on the right-hand side, shows a sense of unity. The tonality of the ceiling and wall on the right, spreading towards the left side of the picture, is a gradated scheme of dark merging into light.

The rugs in the finished painting seen in the forepart of the picture are less obvious than in the sketch, and the floor has more area space. The shape of the chair in front of the picture helps to give a sense of stability to the general composition.

I chose for reproduction the picture entitled "David Cox in his Studio at St. Ives, Cornwall" (Plate XI), chiefly because there is a dramatic force in the general decoration, especially where the easel is concerned. This towers above all other studio accessories and as a consequence dominates everything in sight. The fact that it is dark in tone value helps to accentuate its importance and to attract the eye of the spectator.

The tone of this easel is balanced to a certain extent by the dark material immediately in front of the seated artist. There is no attempt in any part of this picture to achieve academic finish. The spirit of the subject was in my mind during the whole of the painting. Regarding the pictures on the wall, a certain amount of difficulty arose where tone value was concerned, because I had to be quite sure that each picture, however light or however dark in tone, was so painted that it appeared to be well behind the easel, the figure, and general foreground material. Actually, some of the original studio frames were much darker than those depicted in the painting.

A rather amusing artistic mistake occurred when I first painted the picture of a girl's head seen behind the red chair. As the reproduction shows, only part of this girl's face is now visible, and by keeping the hair and flesh tint light in colour I was able to suggest the feeling of distance between the rich colour of the red chair and the girl. Unfortunately, in my original sketch I painted the portrait so that the model appeared quite close to the artist, looking over his shoulder instead of being behind him and in the frame.

Thus to make a success of a subject of this type one has to sacrifice minor incidentals for the sake of the general effect. In the picture of the bluish boat scene on the extreme right-hand side near the floor, it should be noticed that in my painting the sails of the boats were only suggested in a most impressionistic manner. Theoretically they are quite inaccurate as regards the shapes of sails, boats, etc. Most well-trained artists, including, I hope, myself, have the ability to delineate as much detail as a photographic reproduction. But in order to achieve unity of tone, and also to avoid a tiresome display of sophisticated skill in too much detail, I sacrificed my potential draughtsmanship so as to achieve my major aims.

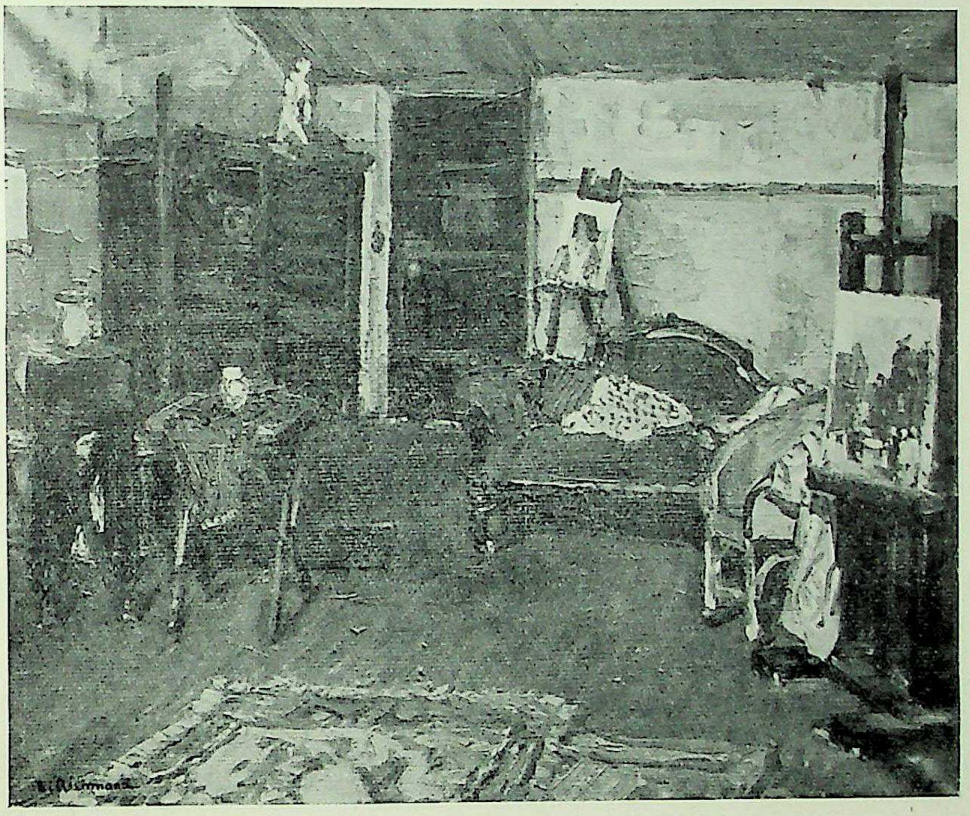

Fig. 45. "A Dark Interior"
(25 in. × 30 in.)

The main feature of this subject is the artist sitting quite low in the red arm-chair. His tie or cravat echoes the colour of the chair on which he is seated. Fortunately for the sake of contrast in my picture, he happened to be wearing a greenish-blue coat. Now this greenish-blue coat would attract too much attention if there were no similar colours in the general composition. The colour echo of this coat is noticeable in the sea picture already mentioned, and also in a small picture on the extreme left-hand side, which rests on the floor, and in other parts of the subject.

There is no mystery in this painting. It is an example of straightforward, direct painting, and from this standpoint the picture may be described as an artistic success. There is one item of some technical interest: the vertical colour streaks that can be seen on the back of the framed canvas that is on the easel. This was achieved by allowing colour, generously diluted with turpentine, to run downward, which gave the feeling of the texture of the canvas without the use of solid pigment.

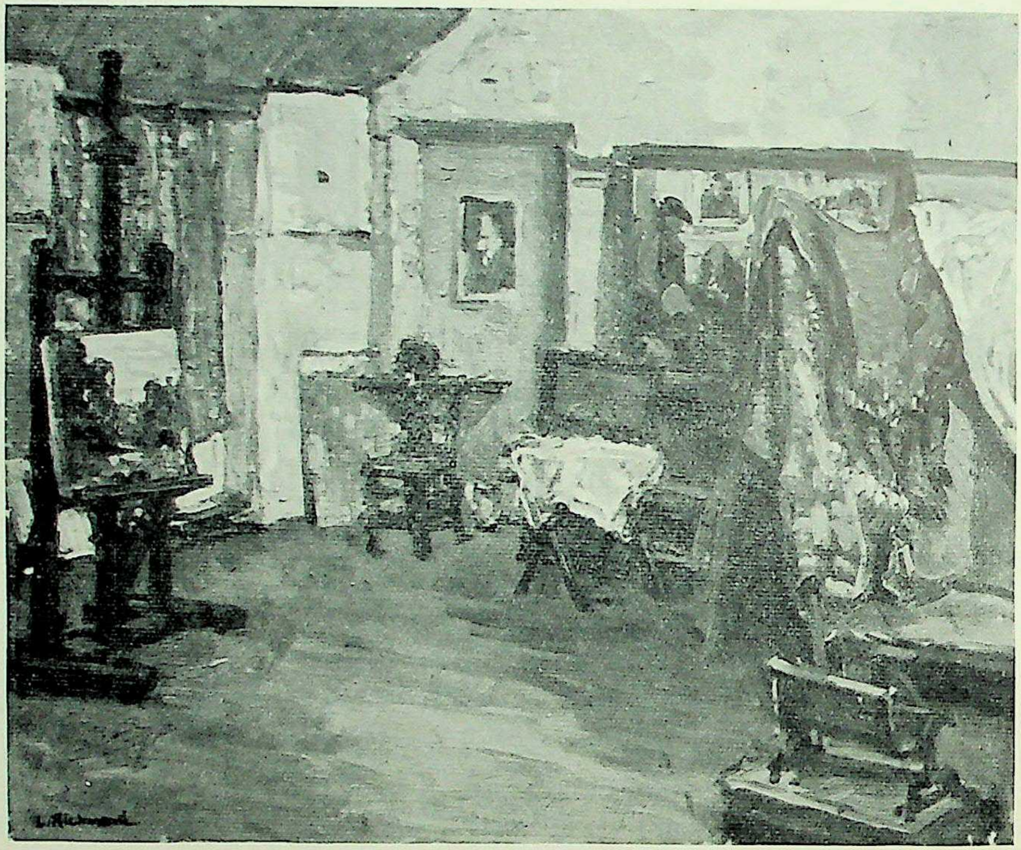

Fig. 46. "A Light Interior"
(25 in. × 30 in.)

I took considerable trouble in painting the brushes and other material in the lower right-hand corner, so that they need not divert the eye from the figure. Incidentally, the suggestively painted brushes point towards the artist at work, which helps to centralize the main interest. For the sake of artistic adventure, I varied the themes of the wall pictures, and I was most grateful to Mr. David Cox for the inspiration I derived from his paintings.

The floor of the studio is rather light in tone. This had to be adequately stated in colour so as to get the correct relationship between the wall and the floor. Whatever interior subject one selects, there is always a logical sequence of tone values. The student is earnestly advised to study these colour sequences before painting any picture. Sometimes the composition of a subject can be apparently involved, but with ingenuity the same involved composition can be stated with artistic and convincing effect, making a pleasant change from pictures in which the composition is understood at first glance. Complexity in composition causes the artist to think more deeply than does an obvious design.

For the student who wishes to know the approximate colours used for this picture, I mention that the red chair was painted with alizarin crimson, mixed with very little blue and yellow ochre. To heighten the effect here and there, pure vermilion was painted on to the wet, reddish surface. A good deal of the wall space was painted with black and white, yellow ochre, a little viridian and vermilion. The tint of the floor was extremely difficult to arrive at: starting off with the usual white and black, I mixed a little yellow ochre and a small quantity of alizarin crimson to get the necessary colour. There is an important point that should be noticed in this painting: the oil paint-box on the floor behind the easel and the seated figure. The box was actually much darker in tone value, so that I had to compromise and make it lighter than in the original subject, to enable it to take its place in correct relation to the foreground material.

The subject entitled "A Dark Interior" (Fig. 45) was painted chiefly because of the rich, sombre, colour effect, which makes the general tone of the picture quiet and non-assertive.

It is a comparatively simple matter to paint an interior with the effect of sunlight exposing the shape of various objects, such as rugs, easel, and incidental items associated with studio interiors. A sunny interior—portraying each object with clarity—leaves little room for the imagination. It requires keen observation to render with success a subject lacking sunlight, in which a dark or light tone may be only slightly darker or lighter relatively to the surrounding tones.

The picture entitled "A Light Interior" (Fig. 46) was also painted without the help of sunlight, but the problem was simple, since each object in the studio could be clearly seen. The painting of interiors is an excellent discipline for artists, whether they work in landscape, figure, or still life.

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